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SCOTS THEOLOGY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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SCOTS THEOLOGY
IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER McNAIR, M.A.

PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF HEBREW AND OLD TESTAMENT EXEGESIS
AUTHOR OF "PERSONAL MEMORIALS" AND "THE HUNGER OF THE HEART"

WITH FOREWORD BY

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Preface

WHAT has chiefly moved me to take this work in hand is the following chain of facts :

(1) That, for upwards of thirty years, I was minister of a church in Kilmarnock, originally connected with a branch of the Secession, and long known as the Church in Clerk's Lane ; which, under the influence of the Rev. James Morison, attached itself, in 1843, to the Evangelical Union ; and since 1897 has been included in the Congregational Union of Scotland—a church, therefore, which has passed through a remarkable development.

(2) That, in exploring the earliest period of its history, I found that its first minister was a James Robertson (1777-1811).

(3) That, when the prosecution for heresy of Dr. McGill, one of the ministers of Ayr, ended in his restoration to office, Robertson was requested by the lynx-eyed Associate Synod of Glasgow to prepare an *Overture*, of the nature of an indictment, in regard to McGill's doctrine, and also to the improper way in which, as they thought, his case had been conducted from first to last.

This commission he accepted, and executed *con amore*, although, judged by the modern canons of decency, it would be entirely out of place for one branch of the Christian Church to sit in judgment on the judicial proceedings of another.

A copy of the *Overture* furnished me with what I record of the ultra-zealous way in which the

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protagonist of the Associate Synod addressed himself to his unenviable task. His aggressiveness was too characteristic, both of the period, and of the Church, to which he belonged.

To this now remote controversy between the Secession and the State Church, personalised in their respective representatives, Robertson and McGill, I have devoted much time and attention, esteeming it a duty to do justice to both, holding the balance even between the opponents, so as to avoid prejudice and partiality.

Questions that were, or might have been, answered in the eighteenth century, or even earlier, including some of great practical importance, the solution of which cannot be postponed for a day with impunity, still, unhappily, remain unanswered in the twentieth century.

Much knowledge, also, laboriously gathered, is still retained as a private possession, instead of being communicated to the ignorant, as it should be, in accordance with the Master's injunction : " Freely have ye received, freely give," or neglected and even resented, by the frivolous and self-sufficient.

Before reading a book, I cannot be satisfied unless I know something of the author and his antecedents ; so I hope that what I have said of my personal experience may serve as an answer, though meagre, to the reader's legitimate inquiry :

" Who art thou ; and whence dost thou come ? "

ALEX. MCNAIR.

Beechwood,

Tillicoultry.

Foreword

The inner history of Scotland in the eighteenth century is of more than local interest. It has left its mark upon the intellectual life of Europe. As a centre of culture the Edinburgh of those days was hardly second to London, and the controversies that were setting the parishes of Ayrshire by the ears were not unrelated to certain grave issues which had long been agitating the mind of France. When Robert Burns was born, the movement known as the Enlightenment, and associated with the names of Rousseau and Voltaire, of Diderot and d'Alembert, of Helvetius and Von Holbach, was well advanced. The seeds of the Revolution had already been sown, and the trouble that pounded at the heart of Europe had its repercussions in the backwaters of the North.

Scotland too was having her enlightenment. She was producing liberated spirits, pathfinders, who were to lead her eventually out of her bondage to that Calvinism which had become a burden too heavy to be borne. By their ethical teaching Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith had prepared the way for a more benevolent and less astringent morality. The solvent of Hume's scepticism was at work upon the body of established prejudices. In Burns the power of laughter and the passion for humanity combined to make the poet the scourge of Calvinistic Scotland.

Among these greater figures there were lesser men who in their own appointed place were working in the service of the same cause. It is to one of these that the present study is chiefly devoted. McGill is not among the heroes of his country's spiritual emancipation; but his teaching and his personality derive a certain interest from the celebrated process to which, for an averred heterodoxy, he was subjected by the Church, and from the circumstance that Burns accorded him the honour of an eulogy. No lover of the poet can read *The Twa Herds* without some curiosity as to the man whose "close nervous excellence" is there commemorated.

The heresy-hunt against McGill is worthy of attention for another reason. Deep down among the roots of history it connects with the most persistent cleavage in Christendom. *Auld Licht* and *New Licht* are names that mark an episode in the perennial controversy over the parts to be assigned to God and to man in the saving of a human soul. The issue that divides a Russell and a McGill is the same issue that divides Augustine and Pelagius, Calvin and Arminius, Jansenist and Jesuit, the same issue that places John Knox at one pole of our Scottish life and Robert Burns at the other.

Early in the last century that issue came to a head in Scotland—and in the very county of Ayr which witnessed the ineffective effort and the recantation of McGill—through the expulsion from the secession body of one James Morison, minister at Kilmarnock. Morison, whose merits have never been adequately recognised by his countrymen,

became the founder of the anti-Calvinistic Evangelical Union, a denomination which, though numerically weak, has been strong in influence.

To its quietly zealous missionary work Scotland in no small measure owes its liberation from the more oppressive forms of Calvinism. Among the men who rallied to the Morisonian banner is the author of this book. As pastor of the Kilmarnock Church, and as Professor in the Theological Hall of the Evangelical Union, he laboured for years, expounding and defending the faith that was in him, and winning for himself and for his cause the tribute due to learning and sincerity. I commend his book to the attention of the public, as the work of a scholar who has made the questions dealt with the study of a life-time.

A. A. BOWMAN.

The University,
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March 10*th*, 1928.

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CHAPTER I

Introductory

In 1786, the year that Burns's First Edition appeared, there was published in Edinburgh a work of a very different character, which also was a product of Ayrshire, viz. *A Practical Essay on the Death of Christ*, by the Rev. Dr. William McGill, who was then fifty-four years of age, and for twenty-five years had been one of the ministers of Ayr, as colleague to the like-minded Dr. William Dalrymple. The author has been described as "a simple, unworldly man, and resolute student; he was at the same time a quaint humorist, and was held by his parishioners in singular affection and respect." By none was he more highly esteemed than by Robert Burns, who knew him from his childhood—Alloway, the place of the poet's birth, being in such proximity to the town of Ayr that it was at one time included in the parish

The volume was justly entitled an *Essay*, being a theological venture in which the author discarded much that was characteristic of the Confessional theology, and launched out on a sea of new hypotheses. "The whole," he says at the outset, "will consist of two parts. In the first we propose to consider the history of Christ's death and sufferings, as related by the Holy Evangelists." This part he

elsewhere describes, more particularly, as "the history of Jesus Christ from His agony in the Garden to His ascension into Heaven." In the second part, he proposes "to explain the effects and consequences of the death of Christ with regard to our salvation." Under this head its effect is first to be considered "as it relates to the expiation of guilt, or taking away the punishment of sins"; and then "as it tends to remove the depravity of sin."

In view of the charges which have long continued to be brought against him, it is only fair to give the author an opportunity of speaking for himself by presenting to the more tolerant and enlightened reader of the present day the following sentences culled from the *Introduction* to his *Essay*, which serve to show the spirit of the man :—

"I wish to give offence to no man, far less to any sincere and humble follower of the LORD JESUS." "If any tenet or opinion be censured by me, it will be chiefly because it is deemed injurious to virtue and good morals. . . . I speak the truth in love, and, at the same time, with the freedom which becomes its dignity." And he concludes with the prayer: "Preserve me, O God, from a vain and criminal curiosity, and from every attempt to be wise above what is written. Suffer me not to be tainted with any degree of a proud, wrathful, and contentious spirit, but give me 'the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind'; and dispose me

with due humility and attention to consult, receive and obey, Thy holy oracles, for Thy glory, and my eternal happiness."

In like manner he concludes several of his chapters with a prayer suitable to the foregoing context, always leaving on our hearts a deep impression of his piety, sincerity and devotion.

"Practical" the *Essay* claimed to be, and the claim was confirmed by that regard for virtue and morals which, at the outset, is avowed by the author as his chief concern. It was nevertheless pronounced "one of the most speculative books which had of late appeared"; and such it was, for it laboured to strip the Atonement of some of the more objectionable features of the doctrine as set forth in the standards of the Church. It needs no special acumen to see that the author's theology was not that of the *Confession*, nor did it for a moment profess to be so.

The title-page bears three mottoes, which further indicate his spirit and intention. The first is taken from Lactantius, one of the Latin fathers of the fourth century :—

Neque religio sine sapientia suscipienda,
Nec ulla sine religione probanda sapientia :

i.e., Neither is a religion without wisdom worthy of adoption,
Nor a philosophy without religion worthy of approval.

When it was alleged by one of his contemporaries that "It is a fundamental principle in the Methodist school, that all who come into it must renounce their reason," Wesley replied: "Sir, are you awake? Unless you are talking in your sleep, how can you utter so gross an untruth? It is a fundamental principle with us that to renounce reason is to renounce religion; that religion and reason go hand in hand, and that all irrational religion is false." So the "Great Itinerary" and "Great Evangelist," whether a "Great Philosopher" or not, was at least wise enough to acknowledge, with Lactantius, that wisdom is essential to religion, and religion to wisdom, so that, divorced from each other, wisdom is no longer truly wise, nor religion truly religious. That man must have been at once profoundly wise and profoundly religious to whom we owe the Hebrew maxim, "The fear of Jahweh is the beginning of Wisdom."

McGill's quotation from Lactantius implies a desire and purpose in the work which he had undertaken, to link religion and wisdom in a closer confederation than then existed between them. The prevalent theology was to him unsatisfactory; and any one who knows what it was will sympathise with him in his disaffection, though one may still doubt whether, by his tinkering of the old creed, he succeeded in replacing it by one more satisfactory.

Persuaded that, in his day, neither was religion so wise, nor wisdom so religious, as it should have

been, he would fain have supplied the defect of both; and for this laudable intention, if not for a success which would have warranted a recurrence of the exclamation Εὕρηκα, Εὕρηκα, he deserves at least a qualified commendation. After the labours of one hundred and forty years in the kindred fields of theology and philosophy, there still is, and will long continue to be, need for a yet more intimate fusion of the two factors, until at last, if ever, they coalesce in a perfect synthesis.

The second of the mottoes (1 Peter 2^2) consists simply of the three words, τὸ λογικὸν γάλα; the third, taken from Romans 12^1, of the three words, τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν. The term common to these two expressions (λογικ–) is in both the one which bears the emphasis.

For "the sincere milk of the word," which occurs in the A.V., the Revisers substituted "spiritual milk," thus doing away with any supposed reference to Scripture, where none was really intended. If, in Romans 12^1, λογικὴν had been, in the A.V., translated as λογικὸν was in 1 Peter 2^2, we should then have read not "reasonable service," but "word service," a rendering quite alien to the context. The "milk" of 1 Peter 2^2, as providing nourishment for the rational part of man's nature, is itself rational, and in the *Douay* version it is so rendered, notwithstanding the tendency of the Catholic Church to subject reason to ecclesiastical authority;

in Romans 12[1], the presentation of the living body, which is there enjoined as "a sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God," is also described as "a reasonable," or rational service—the reason (ὁ λόγος), as distinguished from the body, bearing the essential part even in that bodily oblation, as in every other act of true worship.

That, in the prosecution of his task, the author kept his watchwords steadily in view is evident, in particular, from a passage occurring near the end of the book[1], where he commends Reason and Revelation as akin to each other, and conducive to the same ends :—

"Revealed truth is intended to restore and heal our diseased nature. It is addressed to the understanding of man, and through the understanding to the heart. It is therefore intelligible, and may, with reasonable attention and honest views, be understood and known. It is consistent in every part with itself, and with reason, the original gift of God; satisfying the mind, and productive of the wholesome fruits of righteousness, peace, and holy joy. If anything in the *Essay* is deficient in these qualities, or contrary to them, or if anything of important practical use belonging to the subject treated of, hath been omitted, I have in so far missed my aim."[1]

The main object of our inquiry is to ascertain whether, and how far, the author was true to his avowed purpose: whether his religion was indeed suffused with wisdom, and his wisdom with religion; whether the "milk" offered to his readers, and the "service" offered to his God, both deserve the name "rational," and if they do, to what extent.

[1] p. 532.

2. The *Essay* Burns characterized as " the book wi' heresy cramm'd " ; but this was not his *bona fide* opinion. When he used that expression he was posing as an evangelical zealot, though his sympathies were all the time with the Moderates, and especially with his " particular friend," the author. From the book itself it is evident that Biblical Criticism which, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, had been in Germany added to the roll of theological studies, was in Scotland an art and a science still unattempted. Even the more aspiring of the Moderates it had not yet enlisted in its service. Indeed, it was not until 1847 that a Chair of Biblical Criticism was founded in the University of Edinburgh.

That McGill still retained some part of the " auld orthodoxy " was inevitable. It was therefore, to say the least, an exaggeration, or, in Burns's case let us rather say, a " poetical licence," to describe the work as " cramm'd wi' heresy."

Not only the Resurrection and the Ascension of our Lord, but also the less essential, though not less marvellous, events reported in connection with His dying hours, and those immediately following thereon, he accepted with a simple, child-like faith ; and not as facts merely, but as " divine attestations," confirming, in a notable way, the testimony which Christ had borne to Himself by His character, teaching, and whole life-work.

The darkness which overspread the land during the last three hours of His suspension on the Cross, was to McGill no merely natural occurrence. "It resembled," says he, "perhaps a total, or nearly total, eclipse of the sun; but it could not arise from that natural cause, seeing our Lord suffered at the time of the Jewish Passover, when the moon was always about full." The veil of the temple, "very strong in its contexture, was instantaneously, and without any visible cause, rent from top to bottom." Going beyond the testimony of the Gospels, "The earthquake," he ventures to say, "*probably* shook in some measure the whole city of Jerusalem, but was most sensibly felt at Mount Calvary, where rocks were rent, and sepulchres opened by it. But the most remarkable prodigy of all . . . was the rising of some persons from the dead, saints or pious believers, who, having recently died, could not but be well known to their surviving friends and acquaintances." "The prodigies," he adds, "were *acknowledged facts, which could not be disputed in the age in which they happened.*"

So (which is much more remarkable) after the lapse of seventeen centuries and a half, he for one did not question the reality of any of these astounding occurrences; though, of the evangelists, Matthew alone vouches for all. Mark and Luke mention the rending of the temple-veil, and the three hours of darkness, but say nothing of the

splitting of the rocks, the opening of the graves, or the rising of the saints, who appeared to many in the Holy City; yet these events, if they really occurred, were not less, but rather more, notable than the two which they do record. Moreover, to these risings Matthew does not accord anything like the space to which, if real, their extraordinary character would have entitled them; for within the compass of three short verses (c. 27 [51-53]), he only *refers* to a multitude of marvellous occurrences, all shorn of their particulars. Besides, some MSS. of his Gospel contain no reference even to the most wonderful of the items recorded in the Received Text.

That the resurrections really happened, and were known to Mark, Luke and John, who yet deemed them unworthy of record, is well-nigh incredible. To have wilfully suppressed such "divine attestations" would have been nothing short of treason to the memory of Christ on the part of men who had undertaken to be His faithful witnesses, and as such should have omitted no facts from their narratives, which were associated with His death, and also calculated to glorify the Crucified. Never, afterwards, could anyone be seriously blamed for doubting their reality, when, of those who undertook to record the more important events connected with His life and death, only one of them thought it worth while to draw attention to all the coincidences between His death and the prodigies which followed it.

"It is surprising," says Dr. Oscar Holtzmann, "that, already in the Gospel of Mark, the death of Jesus is embellished with particulars of a legendary character." Of the still more remarkable prodigies unrecorded by that evangelist, he significantly says nothing at all.[1]

In 1897, four years before the publication of Holtzmann's work, the late Professor Bruce, of the Free Church College, Glasgow, had forestalled the German theologian by admitting the legendary character of the earthquake and its consequences. "We seem here," he says, "to be in the region of Christian legend." "Certainly," he adds, "the legendary spirit laid hold of this feature with great eagerness, expanding and going into details, giving, for example, the names of those who rose, which included the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—men not to be identified, one would think, two thousand years after their death by any one in the first century of the Christian era!"

Moreover, it should be noted that all these alleged miracles were of a totally different character from those recorded by the four evangelists, which were never merely miraculous but, almost without exception, miracles of healing and therefore demonstrations of a supernatural power in sympathy with human interests, and especially with human sufferings.

[1] Leben Jesu, p. 383

CHAPTER II

The Person of Christ

The Person of Christ McGill treats neither comprehensively nor systematically. Nor, though denounced as a Socinian, has he any peculiar doctrine to offer on the subject. In his hands it only calls for remark incidentally, in connection with certain passages of the Gospels included in his deliberately limited field of inquiry. An adequate treatment of the death of Christ is impossible, however, apart from a careful study of His life as a whole. A special interest, it is true, has always from the first attached to the Passion, as is shown by the fact that the circumstances connected with it are reported by all the evangelists, and by all with an exceptional fullness. But, in a study of the Atonement, more than the Passion has to be taken into account; for the death of Christ was not the conclusion merely, but the culmination of His life—the spirit in which He died being that in which He also lived, its supreme manifestation indeed; and, as such, from a moral point of view, His crucifixion was really a moral triumph and no defeat.

So much is evident from His own statement: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto,

but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." A "minister" therefore, He was, and in a higher sense than anyone before Him—than prophet, priest or king, or even Israel, "the Servant of Jahweh." In private, and in public, He was ever giving of His own, and of Himself, not indeed in the unlimited measure in which He at last poured out His soul unto death (for He could die but once), yet always unsparingly, and as occasion required, for man's benefit, and especially for his deliverance from the triple bondage of ignorance, disease and sin—the last of these being, beyond all comparison, the greatest and most comprehensive of the evils by which man is hampered and enslaved.

If, for a special study, our author concentrated attention on the death of Christ, including under the term only what part of His life immediately preceded it, and what immediately followed, the theological school to which he was opposed did practically the same thing, though in a different way; for, by their disproportionate emphasis on Christ's last sufferings, they failed to do justice to the all-important fact that, in His case, the life and the death were morally of one piece, and in their nature inseparable. In *The Preachers of Scotland*,[1] the late Professor Blaikie, of the New College, Edinburgh, remarks that "except in the aspect of Atonement the preaching of the Seceders had hardly a word on

[1] p. 209.

the earthly life of Christ—the great field covered by the four Gospels." What chiefly engrossed their attention was His last days, and, more especially, His last hours; to the latter of which McGill also devoted the earlier part of the work now under review.

McGill's Reverence for Christ

Charged with Socinianism, though he was in his own day, and has been, more or less, ever since, the author of the "book wi' heresy cramm'd" never refers to Christ but with an evident warmth of devout appreciation, rare even among the "orthodox." Instead of calling Him by a single significant name, such as Jesus or Christ, or by the double designation, Jesus the Christ, or by a still more elaborate title "Our Lord Jesus Christ," he is always changing his nomenclature so as to suggest different aspects of His character, or of His relations to God and man; and whatever the name be that he employs, he is always careful to make every letter, and not the first merely, a capital. Jesus, e.g., always appears on the printed page as "JESUS," or blessed "JESUS," or "the holy JESUS," or "LORD JESUS," or "LORD JESUS CHRIST." He is not only Lord, but "our LORD," or "our BLESSED LORD"; not only Saviour, but "our SAVIOUR," or "my SAVIOUR," or "blessed SAVIOUR," or "our blessed SAVIOUR," "SAVIOUR of the world," or "DIVINE

SAVIOUR"; not only Son of God, but "SON of GOD," "GOD's dear and only SON"; "the DIVINE Sufferer," and "our DIVINE MASTER." Two expressions more notable than any of these occur on p. 479: "Will you," he asks the reader, "by your words, or works, deny the LORD that bought you? —*the only LORD GOD*, our LORD JESUS CHRIST?" How, in view of such confessions, could any one maintain that the "heretic" was either Socinian or Arian? That one expression, "*the only LORD GOD*" (which, if it errs at all, does so by applying to Jesus a name properly applicable only to the Trinity as a whole), should be sufficient for ever to dispose of the suggestion, or assertion, so often made that McGill did not recognise the full divinity of Jesus. "*The only true God*" is a kindred expression, which, in John 17^3, is applied by Jesus, not to Himself, however, but to the Father, to distinguish Him from "the Son." Neither of these similarly exclusive epithets ("the *only* Lord God," and "the *only* true God") did Jesus appropriate to Himself. "The Son" and "the Son of God" are titles which He did assume; but never once did He call Himself *God*; still less would He have presumed to call Himself "the *only* Lord God," or "the *only* true God." McGill, therefore, instead of under-estimating the divinity of Christ, rather exaggerates it, if to Him he deliberately, and not by a mere lapse of the pen, attributes a name properly applicable not to

Christ, as distinguished from the other persons of the Godhead, but to the Godhead as a whole.

2. After showing, by a careful exposition, how, in the Garden, and on the Cross, "the Man of Sorrows" bore Himself towards the various characters, mostly unfriendly, or even decidedly hostile, with whom He came in contact in these painful situations, the author turns to his readers with the question, "What think *ye* of CHRIST?" Whose son is He? and answers it himself: "He is the Son of Man, it is true; but do you find anything in Him inconsistent with the character of the SON of GOD? I hope not."

In another passage, the bearing of Christ on the Cross elicits from him the generous eulogium "that the utmost power of human imagination, assisted by all the learning of the world, could never have produced such a picture of moral perfection." He thus virtually acknowledges Jesus as superhuman.

"Not every one," said the Master, "that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." With equal justice He might have said, "Nor shall every one enter that kingdom who flatters Me with high-sounding titles, or writes My name in large characters, or in letters of gold." Following in the footsteps of the prophets, He denounced a fawning devotion accompanied by a barren or discordant practice. "What," asked Hosea, "doth Jahweh require of thee but to do

justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" In like manner to the question, "Who shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," Jesus replies with all simplicity, "He that doeth the will of my Father" [1]

With regard to Christ we are sometimes offered our choice of the alternatives: either He was all that He claimed to be, or He was the greatest of pretenders; and with regard to McGill, similar alternatives are presented to us: either he was an eminently devout and faithful disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ, or an arrant hypocrite. It is hard for me, I confess, to understand how, after a careful perusal of his treatise, any unbiased reader could bring himself to accept the sinister alternative. How could any one have expressed a horror of insincerity more fitly or forcibly than in words such as these: "Let sinners profess to honour the Person of Christ as much as they will, and call Him LORD and SAVIOUR a thousand times; they ought to know that He is no SAVIOUR to them"? [2]

In his confessions scattered broadcast on every page, there are, it is true, none of the subtleties of either the Nicene or the Athanasian Creed, or even of the less intricate Westminster Confession, although in its definition of the Person of Christ, the last-mentioned document, if analysed, contains no fewer than thirty separate propositions, actual

[1] Matt. 7^{21}. [2] pp. 543-4.

or potential, which it is not in the power of the average, or even of a superior, mind to embrace in one clear, coherent, and comprehensive thought, and to carry in one's mind in a form easily reproduced. But if, in our day, any one honoured Christ as much as McGill did, or even made a tithe of his professions, none of our churches could, without dishonouring itself and Christ also, deny him the privilege of its communion; and none, I think, would be inclined to do so, none even of those which in public worship expect, from a promiscuous congregation, a rehearsal of the fine-spun metaphysics, which, from the fourth century onward, were introduced into creeds and liturgies by a race of metaphysico-theological thinkers, now, and long since, extinct. These, if translated, it may be easy enough to read from the printed page, or even, after a laborious rehearsal, to rattle off *memoriter*; but for any ordinary person it is much too difficult to correlate them in one complex thought, wherein every clause and clausule shall have its own separate place and proper value. The Churches, therefore, which in appearance are the most exacting in regard to public confessions of faith, have no means of securing what they desiderate or demand; and, in the end, have to be content with much less; for all that they can really elicit from the most docile and compliant of a mixed congregation, far from being the spontaneous expression of a personal faith,

throbbing with conviction and spiritual power in every article and particle, is simply the more or less unintelligent recital of an ancient, complex, burdensome and obsolete formula, drafted by others in a remote past, to express their own views, and not at all necessary to salvation, whatever the Athanasian creed may say to the contrary: "Quicunque vult salvus esse, ante omnia opus habet ut teneat Catholicam fidem."

Christ's way of dealing with His disciples was vastly different: instead of imposing an elaborate creed upon them He asked, "Who say ye that I am?" and left them to form their own idea of what He was from their intercourse with Him, and to state it also in their own words.

Little do those who glibly rehearse the creeds surmise the diversity of opinion lying behind any one of them; for it is always the opinion of the majority that prevailed in Council, Synod, or Committee, and their opinion alone, that is transmitted. There is not a clause in any creed to which objection may not have been taken by some dissentient member of the assembly, but of it there is no record: all difference is buried in oblivion.

It was chiefly in regard to the Atonement that McGill differed from the *Confession* in these two paragraphs where the doctrine is briefly summarised: (1) "The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal

Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully *satisfied* the justice of His Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him" (8[5]).

(2) "Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are . . . justified, and did make a *proper*, *real* and *full satisfaction* to His Father's justice in *their* behalf" (11[3]).

From the doctrine of the *Confession* thus stated, he so differed as to reject the "satisfaction" which, according to both of these propositions, is its very essence.

The Covenant of Works, which plays such a large and also such a melancholy part in the *Confession*, he also discarded. "It never was," he says, "the intention of Almighty God to save men without grace; and for this plain reason, because the thing is impracticable for such creatures as we are." And, if there never was a *Covenant of Works*, then, of course, all the fearful legacy which its breach is said to have entailed for time and eternity on the human race, is unreal too; so, as he concluded, the redemptive theory of the *Confession* rests entirely on a false assumption.

With the orthodox, however, he agreed in acknowledging the death of Christ as having a two-fold relation to human sin—to its guilt and

punishment on the one hand, and its depravity on the other. But its relation to these double consequences of sin he understood otherwise than did the "orthodox." In the death of the Redeemer he recognised simply a *tendency*, but one *mighty* to remove both the guilt and the depravity of sin. That the simple fact of His death cancels either the one or the other he did not believe, the beneficent effect in both cases being, in his opinion, contingent on the sinner's repentance. "None," he held, "are damned simply by reason of Adam's sin," and "none excluded from salvation but such as, by their obstinacy, exclude themselves." In other words:

> "The holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ can procure substantial good to none but such as are disposed to improve the grace conferred on them through Him; it can secure the stability of the righteous only on condition of their continued watchfulness and fidelity, and obtain pardon for sinners only on condition of bringing them to repentance."

Both the doctrines of "Effectual Calling" and "The Perseverance of the Saints" were thus, by implication, disowned.

The "orthodox" view was quite different: viz., that, on account of Christ's death endured for them, the salvation of the elect is absolutely certain, as it properly depends, not on their faith or volition, but on an eternal decree, which will without fail fulfil itself when, by His Spirit, God, sooner or later, works in them faith and repentance. Though for long they may remain unconverted, and after

conversion fall again into sin, even grievous sin, and also for long continue therein, yet, being elect, they cannot be lost eventually, the certainty of their salvation depending on the alleged fact that, by Christ's death, a "full" satisfaction to justice has been paid for their sins, in consequence of which they are released from all liability to condemnation and punishment, even as the debtor is from his debt, as soon as it is discharged—whether by himself or another (*Confession* xi. 3).

That *regeneration* is effected entirely by the action of the Holy Ghost, the soul of man being in a state of utter passivity during the operation, is another dogma which McGill with equal justice renounced. "*We have*," he maintained, "*a part in our own regeneration; we can repent and believe the Gospel; we can put off the old man, and put on the new*"; whereas the *Confession* teaches that a man can neither repent, nor believe, so as to be saved, until, by the Divine Spirit, he is "enabled to answer the effectual call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

In his Gifford Lectures, *The Faith that inquires*, the late Professor Jones also offers a most emphatic contradiction to the doctrine of man's utter passivity in regeneration. "Man's moral destiny is," he maintains, "*exclusively in his own hands*." "It is for him only and alone, to make or mar his moral character." "Neither man nor God

Himself can do this for, or instead of, him."[1] Which of these extreme opposites is the more open to objection—the "*heretical*," that if a man is to be saved, he must achieve his salvation by his own unaided efforts ? or the "*orthodox*," that in his regeneration man is completely passive, while God, without any co-operation from him, changes the character and current of his life ?

Both of these conflicting doctrines are chargeable with onesidedness. History, whether of the individual or the race, is not to be explained but by the interaction of the human and the divine—a truth recognised as regards the individual by St. Paul's exhortation to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."[2]

The hypnotising, devitalising, and consequently demoralising, doctrine of man's complete passivity in the matter which should, above all others, engross his attention and engage his activity (nothing less depending on it than his spiritual and eternal weal) is a mischevious deduction from the total depravity attributed to Adam's offspring; but, being in effect a complete negation of man's responsibility, it is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle from which it is deduced. If, as alleged in the *Confession*, men are "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite

[1] p. 257. [2] Phil. 2^{12-13}.

to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," how can they either believe, or repent, before being regenerated? But regenerated how can they be, truly, freely, voluntarily, if, in the vital change, they take no part whatever? That, till they are regenerated by "irresistible grace," "the best things that men do are equally odious and contemptible with the worst"; that the virtues of the natural man, however faithful he be to such light as he has received, are but "splendid vices," or "glistering sins," are propositions forming part and parcel of the "orthodox" persuasion, with which McGill had no sympathy. Such teaching he, with good reason, disowned as false and unjust, and calculated to "cut the sinews of virtuous industry."

"Whatever power there is in the Gospel . . ., this power," he says, "is entirely of a spiritual and moral kind, consisting of such arguments and motives as are proper to determine the minds of rational creatures, and make them yield a willing obedience to it, from a conviction of its truth and excellence. Though it be attended and supported with all the power of the Almighty, it uses no violence or compulsion to bring men under subjection to it against their wills; neither can it do so, consistently with its nature and design."[1]

[1] p. 546.

CHAPTER III

McGill's "Doctrine of Christ's Death"

"How it 'tends' to put away the guilt of sin, or to save the sinner from the condemnation he deserves," is a question which the essayist answers in a series of three propositions. The first is "that the death of Christ derived all its merits and efficacy from its being subservient to the plan of divine wisdom and goodness for promoting the true happiness of man." The existence is thus assumed of an essential unity between the purpose of God in Creation and His purpose in Redemption. As, in the passage quoted above, "His wisdom and goodness are the source from which the death of Christ derives all its merit and efficacy," so, on an earlier page (237), the author affirms that, "in creating the race of men, God, according to His goodness, designed them for happiness—*happiness without end.*"

Of these two great works, Creation and Redemption, the motive and the objective are thus, in both cases, presumed to be identical—the free essential goodness of God being in either the motive; the true and everlasting happiness of man the end. "We *conclude*," says the author, "with high probability from the best principles of reason; but, from the discoveries of divine Revelation, *we know of*

a truth, that the amiable attribute of goodness predominates in the Supreme Being. 'God is Love.'"

Yet the Creator's purpose was "to be fulfilled, not absolutely and infallibly, without any care on the part of men; but "only in consequence of the right exercise of their free choice, and faithful endeavours, and a steadfast adherence thereto, amidst all the temptations incidental to their state. And, as God did not, and could not, consistently with His gift of freedom conferred on man, coerce him into conformity with His creative design, so, when He undertook the work of man's salvation, may we not again "*conclude with high probability*, yea, *do we not again know of a truth*, that, bringing His wisdom and goodness to bear once more on His holy enterprise, He once more contemplated "the *happiness*," "the *true happiness*," "*the happiness without end*," not of a few, but of the race; again, however, allowing them that free choice with which they had been originally endowed, and of which, notwithstanding the Fall, they were still possessed, so as either to accept His grace, and work with Him for their eternal good, or by self-will to mar, for the second time, His wise and benevolent plan?

Of God's purposes the *Confession* takes another and much less philanthropic, we might almost say a misanthropic, view, viz., that He never contemplated the true and everlasting happiness of the race,

but arbitrarily elected a minority to salvation, consigning the rest, whom by the very same means He might have saved, and saved as effectually, to everlasting perdition. Therefore, the God of McGill and the God of the *Confession* are far from being in character identical. That "God is love" (the crowning truth of Revelation), how can we affirm, if He could have saved us all, and yet chose not to do so? The doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, characteristic of the Reformed Theology, offers for our adoration, therefore, an Autocrat, whom we cannot really love "with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength," as the first and greatest of the commandments requires; for, if the *Confession* be true, we have no assurance that He loves us individually, and thereby the whole structure of our personal religion is imperilled and subverted.

The second proposition is, "That the perfect obedience of Christ in His death, being so highly acceptable to God the Father, was by Him very wisely made one reason for extending mercy to persons not otherwise entitled to it; or for granting sinners the means of repentance, and the benefit of pardon, when these means shall prove successful."

So it is not simply on the sufferings and death of Christ, but rather on the way they were incurred and endured, that our salvation depends; in other words, what matters most is not the physical, but

the moral, aspect of His sufferings, by which He gave the perfect proof of His obedience and submission to the will of God. The measure and the nature of the satisfaction rendered to the Father are both indicated, says the author, by what it induced Him to do: "it was very wisely made by Him one reason for extending mercy to the undeserving." But Christ's obedience unto death could not properly be made a reason for extending mercy to the undeserving, unless it were in itself fit for such a purpose. The very fact, however, that it was to be extended to persons who needed it, though they did not deserve it, and so needed it that they could not be saved without it, called for, yea, demanded, a dispensation of grace which it was appropriate for the Father to grant, as being, by the Son's habitual confession, the "greater," and to such an extent that He was the originator of the plan of Redemption and of all that the Son, in His earthly mission, taught, did and suffered for the purpose of giving effect to the Father's will. What form the mercy took, what effect it has produced, is producing still, and will continue to produce, are points all to be taken into account, would we know wherein the wisdom consisted that regulated its special application. If to sinners it granted the means of repentance and, when the means should prove successful, the priceless benefit of pardon and of life everlasting, was it not indeed fully justified by the result?

In explaining the principle on which the Father acted "very wisely," the author adduced numerous illustrations from the ways of men in order to show that they are continually deriving benefits not only from the good which they inwardly cherish or outwardly accomplish, but also from the virtues and sacrifices of fellow-creatures wiser and better than themselves. Such being the case, may not God "very wisely" do good even to the "undeserving"? The fact is that, in the Divine Providence, no man is ever strictly treated as an individual, who shall get no good but what he earns by his own virtue and industry, and suffer no evil but what he deserves by his own misconduct. And in what way could God, the heavenly Father, give a better proof of His own spiritual perfections than by making the perfect obedience of Christ a reason for supplying sinners with a "mighty" motive to repentance, such as they could never find in themselves; and which, when allowed to fulfil its blessed work, is followed by forgiveness—the pledge of many other untold blessings, which no one, not even the wisest and best, could procure for himself by his utmost endeavour, though it were perpetually maintained.

Christ, before His ascension, gave the charge to His disciples, "that in His name *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24^{47}).

Peter and the other apostles, when forbidden by the Sanhedrim to continue their preaching of Jesus in the temple, justified their disobedience on the ground that, whereas the people and their rulers had treated Him with the utmost despite, God had "exalted Him . . . to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins,"—the repentance in this case having probably a special reference to their great sin, the greatest they could have committed (Acts 5^{31}).

Moreover, "the apostles and brethren," after hearing Peter's recital of the case of Cornelius, and especially of the descent of the Holy Ghost on him and his house, exclaimed with mingled astonishment and satisfaction: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life"! (Acts 11^{18}).

In the early days of the Church, therefore, the evangelical appeal seems to have been much as it was with the prophets of the Old Testament, with John the Baptist, and with Jesus Himself, whose first recorded word, when He began to preach, was a call to repentance (Matt. 4^{17}). It is a significant fact that McGill is continually referring to repentance as the *sine qua non* of forgiveness, while he seldom, if ever, refers to faith, faith in Christ, as the medium of salvation; and equally remarkable that, in the Fourth Gospel, the words "repent" and "repentance" never occur, while πίστις and πιστεύειν recur to the utter exclusion of μετάνοια and μετανοεῖν.

Expressing himself cautiously, McGill does not go so far as to say that the Father made the merits of Christ a reason for granting sinners either repentance or forgiveness, but only for granting them the *means of repentance*, which, properly used, would result in forgiveness.

Nor does he say that Christ's perfect obedience was the Father's sole reason for extending mercy to the "undeserving," but only that it was "one," "another and a principal reason" being His own goodness and mercy. "*Next*," he says, "to the mercy of God, which is never to be forgotten, the benefits of our redemption by Christ flow chiefly from the righteousness and holiness of His life," to which he fitly adds, "If God were without mercy, nothing could prevail with Him to be propitious to sinners, not even their deepest repentance."

How, then, does God make the merits of Christ the "means of repentance"? The question properly belongs to Chapter II of the *Doctrine of Christ's Death*, which is designed to shew how it "tends" to remove the depravity of sin, while, in Chapter I, the author proposes to consider the effect as it relates to the expiation of sin. In neither chapter, however, does he fulfil his promise. In common parlance, the criminal who has expiated his crime is no longer liable to its penalty, having already endured it; but, according to McGill, Christ did not really bear the penalty of sinners so as

to expiate their guilt. If he at all recognises such a thing as expiation by the work of Christ, it is only by attaching an unwonted meaning to the word. "By his righteousness and obedience unto death," he only credits Christ with supplying "the means of repentance," which, if properly used, result in the remission of sins. In other words, if, in the second proposition of Chapter I, there is any reference to expiation, the sinner himself has to make it, by a repentance which he owes, not to himself altogether, nor even chiefly, but to the "mighty tendency" of Christ's righteousness and obedience to create it.

So far from regarding His sufferings, or His obedience, as charged with an expiatory value, the essayist says distinctly: "The Cross of Christ and all His sufferings were providentially allotted to Him, not for their own sake, but for the sake of something else in itself pleasing to God, *who intended thereby to make Him perfect, and by His means to bring many sons to glory.*"

A variety of important functions he ascribes to Christ in the following paragraph; but of expiation the reader will observe there is not a word: "The direct and immediate end of His mission was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; to confirm His doctrine by evidences; to set an example of what He taught; and, in short, to promote the salvation of sinners in the most effectual manner, whatever sufferings His doing so might bring upon Him, and

though it should cost Him His life. *This*," he adds, " was the will of God in regard to Him and the work which He had given Him to do."[1] So far, then, from fulfilling the main purpose of God in regard to sinners for their salvation, the death of Christ depended on circumstances, and might even turn out to be unnecessary!

The third proposition runs thus:

" That, in reward of Christ's righteousness and obedience unto death, God invested Him with the glorious power (1) of calling sinners of every nation to repentance; (2) of forgiving their sins when penitent; and (3) of raising them from the dead to eternal life, as well as of punishing the obstinately disobedient."

(*a*) Strictly speaking, the calling of sinners to repentance is no exclusive prerogative of Christ. Every one who knows what sin is, what evil it works, and will continue to work, both here and hereafter, is not only himself under obligation to repent, but also in duty bound to summon others to repentance, so far as he has access to, and influence with, them.

But, of course, the less of a sinner he is, and the more of a saint, the greater is his title to admonish the erring, and the more effectual also his appeal. On that principle none has called, or can call, sinners to repentance so effectually as He who, among men, is the one solitary exception to sin's uni-

[1] p. 245.

versality, and the one solitary example of perfect love.

(*b*) In the days of His flesh not only did Christ Himself forgive, He also taught His disciples to do so. This lesson He enforced impressively by the memorable parable of the two debtors, and in other ways, even in the Lord's prayer. Let us not forget, then, that, if we are forgiven, or even pray to be, we ourselves ought to forgive ; and have received from Christ a commission so to do. We, however, can forgive a wrong only in so far as it is done to us ; but every wrong done by man to man bears another aspect, being a wrong done to God also, which He alone has power to forgive. So far, therefore, the scribes were justified when, hearing Christ say to the paralytic, " Thy sins are forgiven thee," they exclaimed, " Who can forgive sins but God only ? "

But why should anyone include among "the glorious powers" with which, *after His death*, Christ was invested as a reward of His obedience, functions of which even we, though sinners, in a limited measure partake—such as the calling of sinners to repentance, and the forgiveness of sins—and overlook prerogatives which He possessed from the very beginning of His ministry, implying a practical identity with God, in which it would therefore be presumptuous for any of us to claim even a humble share ?

Which of us could adopt any of the subjoined

sayings, all uttered by Christ *before* His life on earth was finished ; and which imply an authority at least equal to any said to be conferred on him as a reward for His perfect submission to the Father's will ?

1. The *Father* loveth the Son, and hath given *all things into His hand"*(John 3^{35}).

2. The *Father*, who sent me, He hath given me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak ; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak" (John 12^{49-50}).

3. Jesus knew "that the *Father* had given *all things into His hands"* &c. (John 13^{3}.)

4. " The words I say unto you, I speak not from myself, but the *Father*, abiding in me, doeth *His* works (John 14^{10}).

5. " The word which ye hear is not mine, but the *Father's*, who sent me " (John 14^{24}.)

6. " As the *Father* gave me commandment, so I do" (John 14^{31}).

7. All things that I heard from *my Father*, I have made known unto you."

8. " *All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine"* (John 16^{15}).

9. " Thou [the Father] gavest Him [Thy Son] *authority over all flesh*, that, whomsoever Thou hast given Him, to them He should give eternal life" (John 17^{2}).

If Christ could say all these things concerning

Himself before He surrendered His earthly life, why should He have to wait till His death for the power of calling sinners to repentance, and of forgiving the penitent—both of which functions He performed before He died? and how could He say "The Son of Man hath power ON EARTH *to forgive sin"?* (Matt. 9^6).

(*c*) The third "glorious power" said to be conferred on Christ as a reward for "His righteousness and obedience unto death," was the power of "raising from the dead to eternal life" the penitent, whose sins He had forgiven.

While retaining the common belief that death falls on every member of the human race in consequence of Adam's sin, the Essayist proposes what he meant to be at once *A Rationale of the Resurrection*, and *an Apologia pro Deo*, proceeding on the assumption that to God Himself, after its pronouncement, His judgment appeared too severe, and therefore unjustifiable!

Believing that God's original intention in regard to man was that he should live for ever, and be for ever truly happy, was it consistent, he asks, with such a design that, from the very beginning of its history, death should have fallen on every unit of the race because of a single transgression, which, far from being a gross or persistent act of rebellion, was committed in a moment, by the primal pair, while they were yet in their infancy and altogether without experience? One might even

go further and ask, If Adam's ruin really sprang from a desire for knowledge—"the knowledge of good and evil"—which, of all the departments of knowledge, was to man at the beginning of his existence, the most essential, as it has always been, and still is—was it really a sin, and not rather a gratifying sign of budding intelligence? a thing therefore to be encouraged and commended? And if God is Himself possessed of that very knowledge, as in *Genesis* 3^{22} He confesses to be, and if He also guards it jealously as His special prerogative, what harm could there be in man's desiring to obtain, or in actually obtaining, a share thereof? Yea, might he not legitimately aspire to such a possession, if he was really made in the image of God (Genesis 1^{26}), and without it could neither discharge his duty, nor fulfil his destiny?"

But though, on reconsideration, God is said to have tempered with mercy His first estimate of Adam's guilt and responsibility, hitherto, without exception, every one of his offspring has had to submit to the primitive sentence of death, as though it were perfectly normal, perfectly reasonable, perfectly just, and nowise penal, or unduly severe. However, instead of revoking or commuting the death-penalty, as He might have done in accordance with His alleged afterthought, we are told that, without revealing His kind intention to the race, He conceived a purpose, which He has ever since

harboured in His heart, a purpose to counteract, at some time or other, by resurrection, the woeful ravages of death.

How, alone among mortals, McGill came to be favoured with the knowledge of that divine secret, we are not told. "The rigour of the law," he says, speaking again as with a supernatural authority, required that the penalty of death should be "eternal"; but what could that mean save that a body once dead should be for ever dead? But, according to the special revelation vouchsafed to the minister of Ayr, God, having revised His judgment, determined that the reign of death should be only for a time, and that man should be eventually delivered from it, not by a revocation of the sentence of death, but rather by a resurrection presupposing its execution; and that, with his resurrection, there should also be restored to him "the capacity of immortal happiness, on condition of a sincere repentance, and a patient continuance in well-doing, *though attended with imperfection.*"

So the Unchangeable changed His policy, moderated His moral demand, and tolerated shortcomings on the part of man such as He did not, when He first laid down the law, stern in its prohibition, and stern in its threat: "In the day thou eatest of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt surely die"!

Such a scheme propounded as a fresh contribution to the theology of the eighteenth century, amazes

us by its presumption. Like every other doctrine attributing to God any species of defect, it stands self-condemned, because unworthy of His unerring perfection, being grotesque indeed, as well as irreverent, and calculated to vitiate any conclusion founded upon it. Instead of being a true *Apologia pro Deo*, such a *Rationale of the Resurrection* is really a grave indictment of God's wisdom and goodness, and even of His justice.

In fulfilment of the divine intention revealed to him, McGill anticipated not one resurrection merely but two, both designed to be in some way a compensation for the death due, not so much to Adam's transgression as to the excessive severity with which God had requited it, and of which He had subsequently repented! One of the resurrections would consist in the raising by Christ to "eternal life" of such of the dead as had repented and been forgiven, and of such alone.

In view of what he meant in a previous passage by "eternal life" the expression is here to be understood as simply the renewed life of the body, with "the restored capacity of immortal happiness" superadded. It is therefore used in an inferior sense to that which it bears when associated, as it is, especially in the Fourth Gospel, not with a rising from the dead, but simply with faith in Christ, wherein it takes its rise, and with which it always goes hand in hand.

The other resurrection, being general, is not, like the former, confined to the penitent, nor is it an invention of McGill. Both its prediction and its execution are, in John 5^{28-29}, attributed to the Son of Man :—

"An hour cometh in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they thay have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment."

This resurrection seems to make a separate resurrection for the penitent unnecessary, for along with the impenitent they could have been raised at the general resurrection. Whatever may have been the case in former generations, many are now slow, or altogether disinclined, to believe that the great prediction of a universal resurrection was really uttered by our Lord, though by the fourth Evangelist ascribed to Him.

Of it, and also of a group of verses in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel—viz., 39, 40, 44, and 54, in all of which Christ promises to raise His own, and them alone, "at the last day," Professor Ernest F. Scott, of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, a man honoured among all the Churches of the Presbyterian Order, is bold enough to say: "They are doubtless to be explained as reflecting a popular Christian dogma, which was not wholly consonant with the writer's own thought"[1]—in

[1] *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 249.

which case both the general resurrection, including just and unjust, and the particular resurrection confined to the penitent, would be in some measure, if not altogether, discredited. McGill, on the other hand, had no doubt either as to the authorship of the prophecy in John 5^{28-29}, or as to its eventual fulfilment. Here, however, it may be appropriate to remind the reader that of his overfacile faith we had an illustration in his unhesitating acceptance of the resurrections reported by Matthew alone of the Evangelists, as immediately following the death of Christ. But, in his day, there must have been many quite as prone to faith, or quite as credulous indeed as himself, if he could speak with truth and without exaggeration of the "*universal resurrection as a sure and universally acknowledged object of our faith.*"

This unqualified confidence is the more remarkable in view of the fact that for years he had been a contemporary of David Hume, while the latter was busy propagating his sceptical philosophy, in which he maintained, *inter alia*, that, miracles being contrary to the general experience of mankind, no testimony by any witness, however trustworthy in other respects, can furnish a sufficient ground for believing that they actually occurred. The evolution of such teaching McGill, along with other Scottish theologians of his day, may be presumed to have followed with an interest more or less intense ;

and yet, from what he says, it does not seem to have in the least shaken either his faith, or that of anybody else, in the miracles of Scripture. If, ten years after the death of Hume, Dr. McGill was still justified in affirming that an universal resurrection was "a sure and *universally acknowledged object of our faith*," Hume's destructive influence on the theology of his countrymen must have been infinitesimal, or even nil. With such a miracle is there any other to be compared? But had there ever been a time in the history of the Christian Church, or even in the apostolic age, when such a statement could have been made with justice and precision?

While believing that, in the general resurrection, such as have not repented shall be raised along with those who have, the minister of Ayr believed, in accordance with John 5^{29}, that the impenitent too shall be raised; not unto life, however, still less unto "eternal life," but unto judgment, resulting in torment to the resurrected body as well as the soul—an experience the very opposite of the benevolent end attributed to God as a compensation for the universality of death as a penalty for the first man's first sin! If He really meant to mitigate the doom of the human race, would it not be far better for the impenitent not to be raised at all than to be raised only to suffer in body as well as soul, that "aeonial destruction," which, according to St. Paul, is the doom of those "that know not

God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1[9])?

With regard to the part played by resurrection in the doom of the impenitent, McGill, the "heretic," and Moir, of Tarbolton, the champion of "orthodoxy," partly differed and partly agreed. The one held that resurrection was designed to be a benefit to man by undoing the work of death; whereas the other regarded it as a means of aggravating the death penalty by making the body co-partner with the soul in suffering as in guilt, and so placing "the whole person under vindictive wrath for ever." "The body," he says, "as well as the soul, was to suffer endless punishment,which necessarily supposes its resurrection from the dead." To ascribe to God such a policy were to charge Him with more than a fiend's revenge. Why should not the dead, although they had been the worst of malefactors, be allowed to remain in their graves, if at the resurrection their bodies were still there, in a bodily form, and not yet reduced, as they must have been sooner or later, to mere mould, indistinguishable from the soil lying above, beneath and around them? Why not, if after restoring their dust to life, God had nothing for them in reserve but endless torment of body, as well as soul?

In the Fourth Gospel "eternal life" is not a gift deferred to, or dependent on, a bodily resurrection, but one that may be possessed here and

now; and whoso has it, and knows that he has it, may be, not without reason, disposed to regard it as, of all gifts, the most divine—the *summum bonum*, the *ne plus ultra*, possible to humanity; and so to inquire, what advantage can I gain by a resurrection which is not really, and cannot possibly be, a literal re-surrection, i.e., a rising again from the grave of the very body that had been therein deposited?

Have I not already, he might ask, the pledge of all I need, and all I desire? Yea, has not the greatest of God's promises been already fulfilled in me? To have "the capacity of immortal happiness," nor that alone, but the content also, do I require the rehabilitation of this frail tabernacle of clay? Can I not live, and be happy, yea, perfectly happy, without it, as other and more exalted creatures of God are supposed to be, if I am a veritable partaker of the "life eternal," and divine? And, if my disembodied spirit needs a vestment of some sort, as St. Paul suggests (2 Cor. $5^{3\text{-}4}$), may it not be provided in some other way than by a reparation of this faded vesture of decay? It would ill become me, I admit, to decry the body which has, in so many ways, proved helpful to me in my communications with the outer world; but the resources of God are manifold; and when, in the course of time, I lay aside the frail body in which I have so long lived, laboured, suffered and learned, may He not be able to supply me with a new covering as suitable

to my new environment as my present integument of flesh is to my soul on the one hand and the world on the other ?

1. Is it a real climax, then, is it not rather an anti-climax that, after saying to a Jewish audience, " This is the will of Him which sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing," Christ should immediately add, " He gave it all to me [as a trust] that I should lose nothing, but *raise it up again at the last day* " ? (John 6^{39}).

2. Or that He should say, " This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life " ; [have it now, without waiting for a distant future], and then go on to say again, " *I will raise him up at the last day* " ? (John 6^{40}).

3. Or that He should first say, " No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me, draw him " ; and then, for the third time, repeat the words, " *I will raise him up at the last day* " ?

4. Or that he should first say, " He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath* eternal life " ; and then say yet once again, " *I will raise him up at the last day* " ? (6^{54}).

Is it not remarkable that, no fewer than four times, within the bounds of a short passage (John 6^{39-54}), Christ should thus with reference to the same person, viz., the believer, variously described, use the identical words, " *I will raise him up at the*

last day" ? and even more remarkable, that He should so often repeat the expression "the last day," when, in the New Testament, it is by no means a term of frequent occurrence ? In John 11^{24}, it occurs again, indeed, on the lips of Martha of Bethany, also in John 12^{48}, where it is attributed to Jesus Himself. Therefore, in the Fourth Gospel, there are, in all, six instances of the expression used in an eschatological sense ; but in the rest of the New Testament it does not even once occur. May we not conclude, then, that the expression did not play a large part in the phraseology, or expectation, of the apostolic circle ? How it came to be so frequent in a short section of one of the Gospels, when it nowhere else occurs, is a question not easily answered. It is scarcely a sufficient explanation to say it is one of the author's many peculiarities.

In each of the four verses quoted above, whether they be taken singly or collectively, great importance is undoubtedly attached to the "last day" ; and, as might well be, to the resurrection, which gives the day one of its main distinctions; but in none of the four do we get any information as to the nature of the body raised, or of the advantage it will confer, although, apart from anything else, Christ's own insistent declaration, "I will raise him again," would naturally stimulate an interest in these questions, which would as naturally lead on to further inquiry, unless His hearers were content

with the stereotyped ideas of resurrection current among the Pharisees, and He had no wish to dispossess them of these.

One reason given by our Lord for the future raising of believers is "that, of all which the Father gave Him, He should lose nothing," which may be freely rendered thus: "that of all *whom* the Father gave me, I should lose *none*." But nothing is said as to how resurrection would make His possession of "His own," or theirs of Him, secure or more secure. Was there any reason for fearing that, without resurrection, they, or some of them, might, in some sense, be lost to Him or to the Father or to themselves? And if any such reason there were, what was it, or may it have been?

Does not the "eternal life," of which they are possessed by faith in Christ, place believers beyond the possibility of being lost in any sense? So the great text seems to imply: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish (be lost), but have everlasting life." In another passage of the same gospel, Christ acknowledges His responsibility for the protection and preservation of His "own", a duty which also, however, He claims to have discharged: "When I was with them, I kept them in Thy name; those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and *none of them is lost* but the son of perdition" (John 17^{12}). On this side the grave, "we are kept

by the power of God through faith unto salvation."[1] On the other side, till the resurrection, and after it, is not the law of our spiritual life still essentially the same ?

Mere resurrection from the dead in a physical sense does not save anyone ; for, as we have seen, the impenitent are raised, not unto life, but unto judgment and all that judgment implies.

We have now to face the interesting question whether the emphasis which, in these four verses, is laid on the resurrection *at the last day* is consistent with what Jesus said to Martha, in His conversation with her on the future of her deceased brother. In His talk, instead of magnifying the resurrection on "the last day," He seems rather to make light of it, and to regard it, not as the grand climax of the believer's hope or experience, but rather as an anti-climax, a thing unnecessary, and altogether negligible. When the mourning sister expressed her faith in His all-prevailing intercession, saying, I know that whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God He will give thee [even to the bringing back of my brother to life], he sought to allay her sorrow and anxiety with the assurance, "Thy brother shall rise again." But she, expressing what was then a common belief among the Pharisees, confidently replied, "I *know* that he will rise again *at the last day*" (11[24]). Then, to her astonishment no doubt,

[1] I Peter, 1[5]

probably to her confusion also, and as if to quench a remote and needless expectation on her part, He uttered these weighty words, perhaps the weightiest that He ever uttered: "*I* am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and no one that liveth and believeth in me shall ever die."[1] It is unnecessary, therefore, Christ virtually says, for anyone that, like Lazarus, believeth in me, to wait till the "last day," the date of which no one knows, for his resurrection; he is risen already; already passed from death unto life. The four verses undoubtedly give us the impression, and deepen it by their repetition, that the "eternal life," received by faith, is incomplete in itself, and will so remain till the general resurrection—an impression quite irreconcilable with the grand announcement finally made to Martha.

In their *Short Protestant Commentary on the New Testament*, Professors Schmidt and Holzendorff substitute another and more guarded suggestion for Professor Scott's unhesitating "doubtless." In John 6^{39} the phrase "at the last day," is, in their opinion, "*most probably* a later addition. It disturbs the sense of raising up *spiritually*, which alone is suitable there. The same is the case with the addition, "And I will raise him up at the last day," in verses 40, 44, and 54, where the addition "*distinctly*

[1] John 11 25-26.

interferes with the connection of what precedes with what follows."[1]

Of the truths uttered by Christ some were admittedly of such a transcendent character that the disciples could not "bear" them; and in their attempt to reproduce them they may have occasionally, and quite unconsciously, accommodated them to their own less spiritual way of thinking. The four verses specified above may thus have been brought into accordance with the popular, or Pharisaic, conception of the resurrection; but, like the ideas of the Pharisees in regard to many other subjects, it must have differed, *longo intervallo*, from the high doctrine taught by Christ in John $11^{23\text{-}26}$. Instead, therefore, of "a popular Christian dogma" corrupting the text, may we not rather trace the corruption, if corruption there be, to a Pharisaic dogma?

The Priesthood of Christ.

One of the main causes of the offence given by McGill's publication was his singular doctrine that the expiation by Christ of human sin was not finally accomplished by His suffering on the Cross; that, on the contrary, "having become obedient unto death, and invested with all power in heaven

[1] Vol I, p. 222.

and on earth, He [still] officiates as High Priest over the house of God, and [by degrees] expiates perfectly all sins whatever, past, present and to come, *provided they be truly repented of*." So the sinner must repent, and repenting, be forgiven, before his sins are fully expiated, which is a case of "ὕστερον πρότερον," if anything could be, or, in plainer language, "a putting of the cart before the horse."

But, as already shown, neither in the life, nor in the death, of Jesus does the Essayist recognise anything that could be properly described as an expiation; and what was not begun on earth could not be completed in heaven, or anywhere else, for the atoning work of Christ did not, like the work of an apprentice, admit of improvement. In 1 John 2[1] He is described as "righteous"; in the same verse He is further described as an Advocate, or Paraclete, with the Father for any one sinning of those whom John addresses as his "little children"; in verse 2 he further speaks of Jesus as "a propitiation for *our* sins," i.e., again the sins of any of his "little children," and then he adds, "not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Yet He is not presented to us as engaged in continuing or extending an expiation which He had left unfinished. The work is entirely His own from beginning to end. He Himself indeed *is* the propitiation; therefore it is as perfect as Himself, a further mark of its perfect sufficiency being its validity for all, for those,

therefore, who have not repented as well as for those who have.

If Christ and the Father have any intercourse with each other, which, if they are real persons, we cannot think of them as not having, then they may be presumed to confer with each other regarding the matter of deepest interest to both, viz., the object for which the Son came to earth and suffered unto death. But the Son, who gave Himself a ransom for all, does more than simply confer with the Father regarding the matter dearest to both: He intercedes for "us" when "we" sin, which "we" so often do. Not only by St. John[1] is the office of the Paraclete recognised, but by St. Paul also[2]; and from the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews[3] it receives much fuller recognition, probably from a desire, in keeping with the apologetic purpose of his treatise, to institute, in the case of Christ, a parallel to the action of the Jewish High Priest, who, on the great day of the Atonement, presented Himself before Jahweh in the Holy of Holies, to make intercession for the people, with an offering of blood, "not his own," however, as Christ's was. But intercession is not expiation; nor can it be, as it was to McGill, the continuance of an expiation which was not really begun, and still less completed, when the Lamb of God expired on the Cross. Such a position would be subversive of the Christian faith, as leading

[1] 1 John 2^{1-2}. [2] Romans 8^{27-34}. [3] Heb. 2^{7^5}.

to the conclusion that the Atonement never is, and never shall be, completed, but must for ever continue to be a thing merely in process.

But if Christ's intercession be a figure of speech, an accommodation to the ritual of the Jewish temple, rather than an incessant endeavour to propitiate a God never actually and fully propitiated ; if, in other words, it means, as stated in 1 John 2[1], that Christ Himself, with His terrestrial work accomplished, is the propitiation for our sins, and as such a perpetual and perfect plea on behalf of sinners, the sufficiency of which does not need to be asserted, and insisted upon, by a strong and never-ending argument, in opposition to the reluctant and inexorable will of the Father, His atonement would, in that case, be quite properly regarded as accomplished, and not merely as still contingent, and not yet complete.

In the fact that He " ever liveth to make intercession for us " there may be a measure of comfort, but a greater there is in the fact that Father and Son are already, and for evermore shall be, in such a perfect accordance, the one with the other, that the one does not need to wrestle or wrangle with the other so as to secure mercy for the penitent, the success of plea and pleader being in every case a foregone conclusion.

CHAPTER IV

McGill's "Doctrine of Christ's Death"

(Continued)

The second part of "The Doctrine of the Death of Christ" deals with the question "how it removes or 'tends' to remove, the depravity of sin." The existence of human depravity is thus admitted; but, on the supposition that there never was a *Covenant of Works*, it could never be accounted for by the violation of such a covenant. On the hypothesis that he was created *perfect*, Adam's sin required no inherited depravity to account for it; nor does it need such an unhappy inheritance to account for sin in his posterity. For, if Adam sinned, though morally perfect at his creation, it should not be hard to account for the universality of sin in the race, when all of us begin life in a very different condition from his, being neither physically nor morally perfect but mere babes, knowing nothing. But, after all, in what better condition were the first man and woman when they began the perilous experiment of a moral existence, if they did not possess "the knowledge of good and evil," and were even forbidden, on pain of death, to acquire it, or even to seek it? Compared with their descendants, they must have been in a much less favourable case; for, starting life in utter ignorance, we are at least

free, and not only free, but under an obligation, to seek wisdom, and even make it our chief quest.

1. The moral power of Christ's death the Essay traces to its being, in the first place, a " confirmation of faith," as fulfilling certain prophecies of the Old Testament. With this effect the author begins, because, as he says, the foundation of the Christian character is faith, by which he understands simply the belief that Jesus is the Son of God ; but that is no proper account of saving faith. Even in the proposition that Jesus is *the Son of God*, the predicate requires a definition of the term ; for in both the Old Testament and the New it is employed in a variety of senses. Peter, e.g., at Caesaraea Philippi, acknowledged Jesus to be " the Christ " and " the Son of the Living God," both of which titles were derived from Old Testament usage ; but at the moment, though highly commended for his confession, he knew little either of the Person or the Work of Christ, and even rebelled against the announcement immediately afterwards made to him by Jesus Himself, that He must suffer many things of the elders, priests and scribes, and even be put to death.

The true foundation of the Christian faith and character lies not in any predictions of the Old Testament fulfilled, or said to be fulfilled, in Christ, but in the revelation of Himself, and thereby of the Father, which He gave to the world not in His

words merely, but in His life and work, followed by His death and resurrection.

In accordance with the example of New Testament writers, and of the Church in succeeding ages, McGill quotes largely from Isaiah 52^{13}-53^{12}. But modern scholarship is inclined to identify the subject of that famous passage, not with Jesus of Nazareth, to whom it began to be applied in apostolic times, but with the Servant of Jahweh (52^{13}), who, in the far-off days of the Babylonian exile, was already an historical character, but with an illustrious future before him, which would in every way eclipse his past, and at the same time crown it with glory.

As further evidence that Jesus was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, McGill makes numerous quotations from the Psalms, such as $22^{8,\ 16\text{-}18}$, 35^{19}, 41^{9}, $69^{4,\ 21}$, 118^{22}, most of which are, in their superscriptions, attributed to King David, who lived some thousand years B.C. Whoever the author or authors of these Psalms were, we may be sure that none of them, by a miraculous prevision, foresaw and foretold the sufferings of Jesus. Nor in the matter they contain is there a reason why any of them should be interpreted as referring to Him exclusively, and still less why all should be so interpreted. The Psalms quoted are in this alike that they abound in complaints of grievous wrongs sustained; but the injuries and the insults are described in terms so general that they do not admit

of a clear identification with those of Christ. Moreover, the writers are so far from displaying the spirit of Him who, in His agony, prayed for His enemies, that they, or some of them, indulged in fierce imprecations on their persecutors (69^{22ff}). Yet in the New Testament these passages are all freely and indiscriminately applied to Jesus, thereby furnishing McGill with a precedent for the use which he makes of them, and not of them merely, but of others also. For example, the complaint, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" ($Ps. 41^{9}$), undoubtedly refers to some false friend, but not necessarily to Judas. Moreover, when the Psalmist wrote, "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (69^{21}), he was not thinking of the "wine mingled with gall" (*οἶνον μετὰ χολῆς μεμιγμένον*[1]) which was offered to Jesus when He was dying; the one was an unfriendly act, the other an act in conformity with a humane usage prompted by the pity of a rather pitiless people.

In the Gospels, especially in St. Matthew's, in the Acts and also in the Epistles, there is an excessive eagerness displayed to find in Psalm or Prophecy or even in the Law, a verse, clause, or clausule, referring, or having the appearance of referring, to some incident in the life of Christ, or to some item of His experience,

[1] Matt. 27^{34}.

however insignificant; and then to construe it as a prophecy fulfilled in Him, and a proof that, with the idea of Christ the Spirit of God had been conversant for centuries before He appeared in the flesh. Of this tendency examples occur where they are least to be expected; in the Gospel of John, e.g., "the spiritual evangelist." Not only does he record that, at the crucifixion, the Roman soldiers officiating did not, as His sufferings were drawing to a close, break a bone of Christ's body, though they broke the legs of the malefactors on either side of Him; he also recognised in this forbearance the fulfilment of a minute direction given in the Law regarding the pascal lamb: "a bone of him shall not be broken" (Exodus 12^{46}). Is it not a sufficient explanation of this exceptional treatment that, being already dead, Christ needed not to have an end put to His sufferings by the breaking of a bone? What a curious blending there is here of the literal and the figurative! Jesus, the Lamb of God in a figurative sense, being treated as if He were the pascal lamb in the literal sense! Would He not have been the true Lamb of God though one of His bones had been broken? Certainly much worse did befall Him; for, according to competent medical testimony[1], the water and the blood, which flowed from His wounded side, proved that His heart had been ruptured, not by the thrust of the

[1] Dr. Stroud's *Physical Cause of Christ's Death.*

soldier's spear, but before it. Nothing could have been further from the thought of the Roman soldier than to give effect to the rule laid down in Exodus 12^{46}.

Our author is intelligent enough to observe that "some of the passages of the Old Testament to which appeal is made in the New as prophecies fulfilled in Christ, may not have been so intended by the Holy Spirit, but were applied to Him only by way of accommodation." The same remark holds good with regard to his own quotations. Whether passages, not primarily intended to refer to Christ, can be properly said to be prophecies fulfilled in Him, depends on a peculiar use of the word. *Fulfilled* they can no more be said to be than the verse of a poet is, which has been quoted a thousand times, and may be quoted as often again, and in every case with more or less propriety.

2. The moral efficacy of Christ's death the author connects, in the second place, but more forcibly, with the fact that, being an exhibition of divine love, it is also (1) the motive of a large and universal love containing, potentially, love to God, to Christ Himself, to fellow-disciples, and indeed to all men; (2) an argument for, and therefore a means of, repentance; (3) an incitement to proficiency in virtue; and (4) a ground of consolation; for, as He triumphed over all His afflictions and over death itself, so shall they that follow Him.

In handling these spacious propositions, the author shows that the death of Christ had for him a profound moral significance. He also brings it to bear upon the heart and conscience of the reader with great earnestness. In the extracts subjoined I give the author, so much suspected and reviled, an opportunity of showing how intense was his *personal devotion to the Saviour*:

3. "Blessed JESUS! let Thy love constrain me by a sweet irresistible force, to give up *everything*, *however dear soever* it may otherwise be, which would dispute with thee the possession of my heart, or hinder me to be *entirely Thine*"![1]

"As a sinner, it may be truly affirmed that it was *you* [the reader] who took counsel against Him; *you* that betrayed and sold Him; *you* that made Him sweat blood in the Garden; who tried and condemned and mocked and scourged Him, and pierced His hands and His feet on the Cross." All the guilt thus attributed to others he could not but take to himself also, and doubtless did.

"O my God," he exclaims, "I am Thy servant by the strictest ties. Thou hast loosed my bonds; Thou hast broke the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron asunder. . . . And of what value was I to Thee, O LORD! that Thou shouldest have redeemed me at such a price?"[2]

"O my God, I do firmly resolve to deny my

[1] pp. 424-5. [2] p. 480.

own will, in order to follow Thine; counting it my supreme happiness to be Thine, and Thine only; to live for no other but Thee and to depend on Thee alone."[1]

"Here [on the Cross] all the virtues were collected: Toward GOD, a humility which knew no reserves or limitations; a faith in His wisdom, power and goodness, which the darkest scenes of adversity could not stagger; a trust unshaken, a love unbounded, and an undoubting confidence that the end of patient virtue, under the divine protection, would not fail to be happy. . . . Toward men, a benevolence generous and disinterested; a meekness and gentleness which could not be ruffled by the exasperations of reproach and insult, or the sharpness of bodily pain; pity to His cruel tormentors, and prayers for their salvation, ... a patriotic tenderness for His country, notwithstanding its ingratitude to Him . . . private friendship and filial affection . . . in general, a determined preference of truth and virtue, according to GOD's will, above everything else held dear and valuable among men."

If, in these extracts, there is not a true evangelical ring, and also a ring of intense personal devotion to Christ, there is none to be found even in that widely appreciated hymn of Isaac Watts:—

[1] p. 483.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride!

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

The passionate utterances of McGill's quoted above would even justify a comparison with Paul's exclamation: "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

They would also justify us in ascribing to him these two brief but deeply significant confessions, though the *ipsissima verba* were never uttered by him, or uttered in the order here given to them: "By me, and for me, He died"—the one the voice of a deep contrition, the other the expression of an infinite indebtedness.

A Plea for Theological Freedom

4. In 1788, the centenary of the Revolution Settlement, Dr. McGill, in compliance with an order of the General Assembly addressed to all parochial ministers, preached a sermon relative to the occasion, which was published early in the following year, with an appendix pleading for a greater measure of theological liberty, and even for the abrogation of Creed-Subscription.

Dr. Peebles, of Newton-on-Ayr, in his discourse made a veiled but obvious allusion to the teaching of his neighbour, denouncing him, not by name indeed, but as one of a class who, with shameless impudence and unparalleled baseness, received with one hand the privileges of the Church, while endeavouring with the other to plunge a poniard into her heart. McGill replied that, "If there was any such quality in his conduct, it was not *unparalleled.* For was not John Wycliffe guilty of the same "baseness"? likewise William Tyndale? Were not Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, guilty of it, with other eminent promoters, under God, of our happy reformation from Popery? Certainly they all retained their ecclesiastical benefices as long as their persecutors allowed them, and all made use of a certain poniard too (I should choose to call it rather the sword of the Spirit) against their mother Church, and, blessed be God! not without success. . . . Or if he (Peebles) rather loved more recent and domestic examples, was not the same "baseness" committed by the founders of the Secession in Scotland, and of the Relief people? I am far from putting all these persons on a level with one another in every respect, or bringing those whom our preacher so spitefully puffs at to an equality with any one of them. But what I say is, that they all agree in the circumstance of dishonesty and baseness, as stated by Mr. Peebles."

Nor would he allow his objection to Creed-Subscription to be either "a novel opinion," or only "taken up on slight grounds." On the contrary, "he maintained that it hath been a fixed sentiment of the greatest luminaries of the English Church, and indeed of the Christian world, such as Chillingworth, Burnet, Clarke, Hoadley, to which names many, not less illustrious, might now be added." "Subscription," he goes on to say, "ought not to banish from the Church of Scotland, or from her ministers, the right of private judgment, liberal sentiments, and rational inquiry in religious matters, and the impartial study of the Scriptures." "In the meantime," he concludes, "while subscription continues in use, it ought, in spite of all formulas the wildest assemblies can devise, to be understood in a reasonable qualified sense, such as may not arrest the progress of religious knowledge, and set aside the use and authority of the Scriptures, and the obligation to persevere in the study of them, such as is consistent with the Confession of Faith itself."

This utterance on the question of Creed-Subscription was not allowed to go uncensured by the Church. Published by the author, along with his sermon on the benefits of the Revolution settlement, it was immediately included in the libel prepared by the Presbytery, although it was not theological in the strict sense, as were the five "heresies" picked out from the *Essay*. Creed-subscription is

no essential of the Christian faith, or it would be incumbent, not merely on certain office-bearers of the Christian Church, but on the whole bodyof the faithful. Its object is to protect and perpetuate the doctrines of a particular creed. Therefore, unless the Creed be infallible, it is the means of teaching and perpetuating a proportion of error along with what truth it contains, and of circumscribing that liberty of research which is the unquestionable right and duty of every Christian and every man indeed.

Magna est veritas, and sooner or later—and, in a world of inquiring minds, sooner rather than later—it will prevail, as it is ever entitled to do.

To the benefits of the lauded Revolution Settlement, Burns, in his "Elegy on the departed year, 1788," makes the following waggish allusion, suggesting that the "benefits" were not all of a spiritual order, and that temporalities had, or might have had, a pre-eminent place in the minds of the clergy:

> Ye ministers, come mount the poupit,
> An' cry till ye be haerse an' roupet,
> For eighty-eight—he wished you weel,
> An' gied ye a' baith gear an' meal:
> E'en mony a plack, an' monie a peck,
> Ye ken yourselves, for little feck.

CHAPTER V

Leaders among the Seceders: How they Thought and Fought

I

Dr. John Jamieson:
Who, in a theologic fray,
Cast all his courtesy away.

II

Rev. John Moir:
Who either was, or claimed to be,
A Purist in theology.

III

Rev. Thomas Boston:
Who, by a now abandoned Law,
Long held the Scottish world in awe.

I

One of the first to attack McGill in the press was the anonymous author of *Socinianism Unmasked*, which appeared in 1787, the year after the *Essay* saw the light of day. The publication consisted of six open letters, four of which were addressed to the laymen of the Church of Scotland and, in particular, to the members of the Collegiate Church of Ayr; one to the members of the General Assembly; and one to

McGill himself—all professing to be written by *A Friend to Truth*. The author turned out to be the Rev. John Jamieson, of the Antiburgher Church in Forfar; afterwards the first minister of Nicolson Street Secession Church, Edinburgh; a D.D. of Princeton College, New Jersey, and a scholar of antiquarian lore; but best known by his *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*.

The title which he assumed eclipsed the lustre of his Transatlantic degree; for, at that time, the D.D.'s of Princeton, and those who created them, were genereally supposed to be *Friends to Calvinism*, even more than *Friends to Truth*. An author of a finer delicacy and deeper self-respect, instead of flaunting his devotion to Truth on the title-page, would have left his readers to discover it for themselves. On the same page, another and a greater claim is advanced on behalf of the letters, as "proving that McGill denies the great doctrines of the Atonement and the Deity of our Lord"—which doubtful triumphs also might have been left to the reader's own judgment.

Something even worse than vanity shows itself in the inscription on the title-page of three Scripture texts, which the writer uses for the purpose of discrediting his adversary, and creating a prejudice in the mind of the reader.

The first of these was Proverbs 26^{25}: "when he [i.e., he that hateth] speaketh fair, believe him not;

for there are seven abominations in his heart"—the suggestion being that McGill was both a hater and a deceiver, assembling, yet in his heart dissembling, a whole brood of evil passions. Beyond doubt, Jamieson proved himself a "hater", of McGill at least; but the second qualification required by the proverb he cannot be said to have satisfied; for, whatever his hate might be, he certainly did not speak "fair" of his opponent.

The second text was *Luke* 22^{48}: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" For what end was that question so publicly paraded but to insinuate that McGill was a traitor, as well as a hater and a deceiver?

The third watchword was *I Peter* 2^{2}: "As newborn babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." A few months before, McGill had inscribed this very precept on his title-page as an advice to his readers, possibly also as an indirect claim to having honoured it himself in his *Essay*; but, as used by Jamieson, it had an offensive suggestiveness, being intended to wrest from McGill the claim to use the text as an appropriate prefix to his "heretical" production.

The letter takes the form of a catechism, in which, contrary to rule, the speaking is all by the catechist, who alternately advises and catechises the catechumen; and with his queries mingles not a few prayers on his behalf, as the supreme proof

of his own piety! He begins thus, rudely and abruptly:

"Is perjury no crime except in civil concerns? *Perjury*, I say; for your engagements, when ordained to the ministry, had undoubtedly the solemnity of an oath. Are you so fond of filthy lucre that you cannot renounce your living for your faith?"

Where, in such a question is the "meekness" required by the Apostle in dealing with "a brother overtaken in a fault"? (Gal. 6^{1}).

McGill had at length discovered, to his cost, what a bondage he had incurred by swearing a life-long allegiance to the Creed; but, if he was to blame in any degree for violating his vows, the Church which required them as a qualification for the ministry shared with him the responsibility for any perjury that had been committed.

The "Friend to Truth" proceeds to deal with the supposed offender in a hectoring fashion, which sets both justice and courtesy at defiance; and, at every step, makes it more apparent that, despite the honourable title he had taken to himself, he was unfit for the grave task he had publicly undertaken.

Witness his unbounded presumption:

"You *have long been* reading the Holy Scriptures, but it is at least *possible* that you have *never* read them aright."

"*Perhaps* you have not read them with singleness of heart."

"You have *probably* read them only to support your own opinions."

Was the "Friend to Truth" not aware of what even a child knows, that many things are possible which never come to pass? What audacity and impertinence to charge a man with a trespass which he had only perhaps committed!

"If this be the case," continues the inquisitor, "have you no reason to fear that the Lord hath sent you strong delusions that you should believe a lie?"

But was it really "the case," and, from being a mere possibility, had it suddenly become a fact, that the accused had long been reading the Scriptures in an altogether improper spirit?

Waxing still bolder in his effrontery, the catechist passes from interrogation to insinuation: "It is a miserable situation when a man is *afraid to give his own conscience a hearing*. It is a situation still more miserable when conscience is hardened *through the deceitfulness of sin, seared as with a red-hot iron.*"

How had the "Friend to Truth" discovered that McGill was afraid to give his conscience a hearing, and that his conscience was at once "hardened" and "seared"? And why should one be such a coward as to fear his conscience if, being defunct, it can have nothing to say against him? It is true that "conscience makes cowards of us all"; but not when it is "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," and "seared as with a red-hot iron."

"A Friend to Truth" will never bring unverified charges of a grave sort against another, be he a clergyman or anyone else.

"You would be none the worse," proceeded the censor, "though you had as humble a sense of your unworthiness as the Psalmist when he said, '*I was as a beast before Thee.*'"

Such rudeness, coming from a man who should have been an example of the Christian graces, is an unpardonable sin, or one which, to be forgiven, calls for repentance in sackcloth and ashes. It is one thing for a sinner, conscious of a gross offence, to call himself a "beast" before God, but quite a different thing to abase oneself to such a degree at the bidding of another, a greater sinner than himself.

Not yet, however, despairing of the "beast," the dictator now poses as a most affectionate friend, and, "in the bowels of Christ" [think of the presumption] entreats him to pray earnestly, and without ceasing, for the Holy Ghost, whom, as he assures him, he had not yet received. Had he himself received it?

Then, after smothering him with loathsome blandishments, he loads him with further abuse:

"*Perhaps* you have *often pretended* to supplicate His [the Holy Spirit's] operation."

"You *have flattered* yourself that you have trusted in that promise, "Our Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

" No wonder you *have not received Him*, because you *have asked amiss*."

In the first of these allocutions there is a *perhaps*; in the second and the third the *perhaps* disappears, and an *unhesitating affirmation* takes its place.

After all this varied abuse, so piously administered, the " Friend to Truth," " *penetrated with tenderness, and dissolved with compassion*," prays that " the infallible and all-powerful Spirit " may turn the self-deluded hypocrite " from the error of his ways, save his soul from death, hide a multitude of sins, and give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth." O what liberality in prayer! what liberality in all else.

Having by implication, or open assertion, charged him with the deadliest sins, the " Friend to Truth" concludes by addressing the reprobate as " Reverend Sir," but surely in utter mockery; for what title to reverence has he left him; what rag of respectability to cover his nakedness?

Finally, with a fulsome amiability, the unprincipled critic subscribes himself in a twofold character, " Your well-wisher for eternity," and " a Friend to Truth," thus claiming that, in all his insults and insinuations, he had really obeyed the apostolic injunction to " speak the truth in love."

Evidently, though quite unaware of it, the author of *Socinianism Unmasked* has completely unmasked himself.

It was this nauseous blend of egotism, censoriousness, prejudice, and sanctimoniousness, not unmixed with vulgarity, that drove Burns to the verge of distraction :

> I gae mad at their grimaces,
> Their sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces,
> Their three mile prayers and hauf-mile graces,
> Their raxin' conscience,
> Whase greed, revenge, and pride, disgraces
> Waur than their nonsense.
>
> They take religion in their mouth,
> They talk of Mercy, Grace and Truth :
> For what ? to gie their malice skouth
> On some puir wight ;
> And hunt him doon, o'er right an' ruth
> To ruin streight.

Even if McGill had been as great a sinner as Jamieson took him to be, that would have been no justification of his abuse. I do not hesitate to say that the " Friend to Truth " did McGill a gross injustice. So widely do the two differ that there is no comparison in respect of virtue between them. The one, despite the abuse poured upon him, and whatever may be the defects of his theology, commends himself to us by his constant avoidance of scurrilous language, and by the many proofs of conscious indebtedness to the Lord Jesus Christ, while the other, judged by his manners, is neither Christian nor gentleman.

II

Another of the " evangelicals " who early opened fire on Dr. McGill was James Moir, Burgher

minister at Tarbolton who, the year after the *Essay* appeared, published an elaborate review of it, now interesting chiefly as a specimen of the strange stuff which could then be confidently advanced as "the true Christian doctrine." Living not far from Ayr, in a parish doubtless ringing, as were all the adjacent parishes, and many beyond, with the *fama clamosa* regarding McGill, Moir, a stout champion of the "orthodox" faith, would naturally, or inevitably, take a keen interest both in the book and the author. The nearer the two parishes lay to each other, the more would the Burgher feel himself under an obligation to take up arms against a minister of the Establishment, who, as he thought, had wandered widely from the Truth. Certainly he lost no time either in beginning or in carrying through his self-appointed task; for his treatise is of such a bulk that, from the first appearance of the notorious *Essay*, he must have devoted the greater part, or even the whole, of his leisure to its production.

The self-complacent spirit displayed on the title-page of *Socinianism Unmasked* reappears in Moir's corresponding self-advertisement; blowing his own horn, as Jamieson had done, he claims not only to have refuted the Socinianism attributed to McGill but—what would have been a much greater achievement—to have "*vindicated and established the true doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ.*" But now, after one hundred and forty

years, how many Presbyterian theologians would admit the vaunted production to be either "true" or "Scriptural"?

Among the "orthodox" of the eighteenth century, in consequence of their limited outlook and theological pugnacity, the swagger of Goliath was too much in evidence; and Moir, in his presumptuous claim, did not fall behind any of his militant confrères. While professing to be nothing if not "Scriptural," they handled the Scriptures with an unconscious licence, often substituting *imposition* for *exposition*, or, as the Germans would say, *Einlegung* for *Auslegung*, with the result that, presuming to be wise beyond what was written, they became unwise, and sometimes eminently so. McGill they denounced unsparingly for his speculative interpretations, yet their own exegesis was not a whit less wanton.

When Moir claimed for his treatise that it was both "true" and "scriptural," he did not mean that it was true independently of Scripture; but that, being Scriptural, it was also of necessity true. For if Scripture was, as the "orthodox" then believed, not only "given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life," but, in all its parts, the unqualified "Word of God," it could not but be true, and absolutely true, in all its affirmations—a view which the more careful and critical study of later generations has not quite sustained. The claim of

Moir, therefore, amounts to this, that what he had written was the Word of God,—therefore "true," and not to be disputed, but accepted by all—surely a most presumptuous claim!

To illustrate the doctrine of the treatise and the mind of the author, and to show whether he was justified in identifying his word with the Word of God, let me adduce some of his more startling statements, which will make it plain what a terrible incubus "orthodoxy" must then have been to liberal-minded and large-hearted men, and especially to the clergy of that class, who had the task imposed upon them, and had formally accepted it, of commending to the people a Gospel which must have been utterly repugnant to their own feelings and convictions. Such a phenomenon as McGill bound by the Creed, yet struggling to free himself from its oppression, must have been in many cases a necessity, though it was not always avowed, nor safe to avow it!

Substitution

"God hath substitute His Son, who hath fully answered the demands of justice in the room and stead of all on whom He will confer His pardoning mercy" (p. 30).

"The reason why God delights to bestow pardon and forgiveness upon sinners is not because they are penitent, but because Jesus Christ, as their surety, hath paid their debt and satisfied for their offences" (p. 32).

Man's Original State

"God, having created man *perfect*, gave him a *perfect* law as the rule of that obedience and duty which naturally results from that

relation subsisting between the Creator and the creature. This law was put into the form of a Covenant, which is described in our Confession " (c. xix).

The Perfect Law

" The law's *absolute perfection* and *eternal obligation* on mankind is of great importance. . . . This law was at first agreeable to God's holy nature and will, and there is the same reason of its continuance now in full extent as at its first institution."

The Penalty of Adam's Sin

" Death, 'in its full latitude and extent,' was threatened in 'the Covenant of Works.' The death threatened in that constitution is *the death of the* WHOLE *person, under vindictive wrath for ever.* Adam's disobedience to the divine command made himself subject unto death; and the guilt of it *imputed* to his posterity is the cause of their liableness unto death in all its power. . . . It was a *being eternally miserable* which the law of God denounced against man in case of disobedience. . . .! As this threatening respects the ENTIRE *person of man, the body as well as the soul,* was to suffer endless punishment, which necessarily supposes its resurrection from the dead. The essence of this punishment was transferred to Christ, as the surety of His people; and, on this account, they are delivered from it; but others *must inevitably be under it to all eternity,* and bear the punishment of their iniquity " (pp. 56-57).

Christ a Curse

" ' Christ was made a curse for us '—not only bearing a punishment equal to what was threatened, but *the very same.* . . . The persons indeed were changed, and the sins of His people, with the punishment due to them, were the same " (p. 66). " Nothing can be equivalent to the underlying of *infinite wrath* but the actual enduring of it. As to the intenseness of it, it was wrath beyond what the damned in hell shall be capable of enduring through eternity. . . . The wrath that flowed in upon the Redeemer's soul was wrath to the very uttermost " (p. 102).

God's Infallible Control of the Human Will

" Our Redeemer did not die conditionally for all men, but absolutely for all those that were given Him of His Father; all those for whom He died shall be eventually saved by His death,

and every person shall enjoy that eternal redemption for whom Christ obtained it" (p. 112).

"It is a reflection on the perfections of Deity to suppose that God hath given being to creatures of such a nature that He Himself cannot possibly render their happiness certain, though He earnestly desires it, and has been at the greatest expense in order to secure it. It has not yet been proved that God cannot infallibly determine the will of man to a choice of what is right, and good, and holy, without destroying his free agency" (p. 114).

"The principle of sanctification cannot be acquired, but it is wrought in the heart without all human aid." (p. 173)

These assertions are so crude, so dogmatic, so devoid of light and sweetness, so monstrous indeed, and so dishonouring to God, that to discuss them seriously and *seriatim* were to undertake a heavy task, and even to run a risk of upsetting reason itself. Yet for these wild propositions the author claimed that they were both "true" and "Scriptural"!

In the book there is justice done neither to *Scripture* nor to *Redemption.* Much is said about "divine justice," and even "the Father's justice," that is quite at variance with our idea both of justice and of Fatherhood; much to favour the impression that, of all tyrants, God is the most austere, but nothing to suggest the heavenly Father's love for His children. Much, too, is made of Adam's sin, which, however, was really no sin at all, if it was simply a constitutional yearning for "the knowledge of good and evil"; for such knowledge is no evil, existing, as it does, in its greatest perfection in God Himself (*Genesis* 3^{22}). Of the magnitude of the curse said to have been inflicted on Adam and his posterity, of

the countless number it affected, as of its duration and intensity, there is, on the part of Moir, no just appreciation; even for the vast multitude hopelessly excluded from salvation he has no tear to shed.

If "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," the same may be said, with equal truth, of the woes universal and never-ending, which "orthodoxy" was not ashamed to ascribe to the supreme Judge as the punishment of Adam's posterity. In opposition to such unbounded harshness and cruelty, McGill bore testimony to the leniency of God, when he described Him as willing to overlook involuntary frailties and smaller blemishes, and even to allow the benefit of repentance in case of wilful sins . . . "In this way we are taught to hope for salvation by the Gospel, and none of our kind, strictly speaking, can ever be saved on any other terms" (pp. 273-8).

In opposition to the Creed, he bears further testimony to the divine clemency: "The Supreme Lawgiver determined from the beginning to mitigate in our favour the rigour of law, to make allowance for human error and imperfection, and to accept of repentance and sincere obedience, instead of sinless perfection."[1] How much more reasonable is such a view of God's way with fallible mortals, and

[1] pp. 251-252.

especially with the ignorant and inexperienced progenitors of our race, than His dealings with them as set forth in "the Covenant of Works"! The ἐπιείκεια commended by St. Paul to the Philippians (4^5) as a virtue to be exhibited towards all men, is conspicuously wanting in the God of the old "orthodoxy," though recognised and insisted upon by a "heretic," who, like many another so-called, strove for the honour of God, and so brought unmerited dishonour on himself.

III

To understand the provocative forces which McGill had to grapple with before he wrote his *Essay*, and in writing it, one must take into account the mighty hold which they had on all classes of the people, and how they had for ages, from the days of John Knox indeed, dominated the Scottish Church. "The old divines," Dr. James Walker of Carnwath being witness,[1] "cling to the view that Christ not merely suffered, but bore *the same sufferings in kind* which were due to His people"—a view which, as we have seen, Moir of Tarbolton held and propagated as late as 1787. But if this be Scripture doctrine, where in Scripture is it to be found? How, by any possibility, could the sinless Son of God suffer the peculiar woes which sin inevitably entails upon the sinner?

[1] Cunningham Lectures, p. 46.

The identity alleged between the penalty due to the elect and the sufferings endured by Christ as their substitute, emphasises, to a quite unwarrantable degree, the idea that His sufferings were of the nature of a legal satisfaction, from which, when once accepted, it followed, by a rigorous logic, that it must be "real," "full," and "exact," though it is nothing less than absurd that the mediatorial sufferings of Christ could be, or had to be, or actually were, identical with those due to sinners. Like Shylock's demand for his pound of flesh, a strictly legal theory of vicarious satisfaction for sin results in the impossibility of such a transaction.

To one ignorant of its historical antecedents, Moir's doctrine may appear strange, uncouth, barbarous, or even the wild freak of a distempered intellect; but it was really far from being the vagary of a solitary dreamer, or the extravagance of an isolated fanatic; it was, at the time, the common faith of the Scottish people, who had developed their Calvinism, or whose Calvinism had been developed for them, into a pernicious scholasticism, and who were still immersed in a dogmatic slumber. So, instead of counting himself exceptional, eccentric or heterodox in his views, Moir, steeped in the theology of Boston, claimed for his doctrine that it was not merely "orthodox," but "true" and "Scriptural," and by implication, entitled to universal acceptance!

In 1770, thirty-eight years after his death, Boston

was still a great theological authority in Scotland; and, through the press, was still preaching, preaching daily, to an audience which, if gathered together from far and near, would have crowded over and over again the little kirk of Ettrick, in which his pulpit stood, and where his word was received as the very word of God. In the year mentioned, his well-known publication, *Human Nature in its Four-fold State*, attained the rare distinction of a twenty-first edition; and, only two years later, the demand for his highly seasoned doctrine being still unsatisfied, another work by the same author, *A View of the Covenant of Works from the Sacred Records*, was issued from the press—the same theology as in *The Fourfold State* being reasserted with the same dogmatism, with the same emphasis on The Covenant of Works, and on the "infinite wrath" of God against sin and sinner; with the same absolute negation of hope to any but the elect; and, therefore, according to the implications of the *Westminster Confession*, to the greater part of the human race in every age.

The penalty of the broken Covenant was declared to be nothing less than death to every child of Adam, and not merely what is commonly understood by the term, "but death in its full latitude and extent," "legal death," "spiritual death," and "eternal death." The demands of "divine justice" were magnified to a stupendous degree until they ended

in a stupendous injustice; and so the author failed, indeed he never tried, as Milton did, "to justify the ways of God to men." As he conceived it, "divine justice" (which is, of course, the very perfection of justice) left no place whatever for love, or mercy, to any but the elect! and therefore even the love and the mercy shown to them could not but be of a doubtful character. "The highest good cannot be attained," says Dr. Edward Caird in one of his *Lay Sermons*, "by any one, so long as there are many who are excluded from sharing it." If that be true, the "elect," on whom alone God bestows His saving grace, must be less blessed than they would have been had His love been more comprehensive, and embraced humanity at large. Boston's conception of absolute justice was in fact nothing less than a monstrosity: "It suffers not," he said, "a grain of comfort to be put into the sinner's cup." "Thus it is," he added, "with the damned in hell; and *thus* Christ, as man's (he really meant some men's) Surety, has the sun of His Father's countenance eclipsed when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But surely "Justice," "the *Divine* Justice," "the *Father's* Justice," admits of being presented in a more attractive guise. The justice that is simply horrible, instead of being "the very perfection of justice," is no justice at all.

Though McGill was not born till 1732, the year that Boston died, and therefore could have

had no personal acquaintance with him, yet these numerous editions of the *Fourfold State* assure us that, through intercourse with people around him, he must have been, from an early age, more or less conversant with the Bostonian theology; but the impression which it made on the multitude it happily failed to make on him. It was high time that the reign of "orthodoxy," as represented by the school of Boston, should draw to a close; and McGill really rendered a praiseworthy service to the Churches in Scotland (for by this time there were more than one) when he challenged it, and with it "The Covenant of Works." Even in the heyday of Bostonianism, may we not take it that, as was too often the case in England in Milton's day,

> "The hungry sheep looked up, and were not fed" ?

only stupefied, or even horrified? and that the preachers themselves could have had no satisfaction in their message, which could not have been, with any propriety, described as "*glad* tidings of *great* joy to *all* the people" (παντὶ τῷ λαῷ)[1] and, as we might even add, with ample warrant, "to all the peoples" ?

Indeed, it was *glad tidings of great joy* to nobody! For more than one generation now the majority of Presbyterian ministers have in their preaching deliberately withheld the dire theology of the old Scotch divines. The late Professor Hastie, of Glasgow University, tells of "a learned nobleman,

[1] Luke 2^{10}.

who, in his time, stood out conspicuously as representing the living spirit of the Scottish Church, and deemed it a ground of apology for its continued maintenance, that, through his long life, he never heard the doctrine of reprobation referred to in a Scottish sermon. Be this as it may, it is really matter of regret, and not of congratulation, that the central doctrine of a Church's creed, instead of being prominently set forth to be a source of light and life and power to the community, should be hid as under a bushel, lest it scare the people or drive them into open revolt.

Hastie himself, though appointed to lecture on the *Croall Foundation* in the interests of "orthodoxy," began his course by extolling to the heavens *The Reformed Theology*, but ended by declaring his belief that, in " the far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves," the chasm between heaven and hell shall have somehow disappeared.

A few years later, in 1905, under the auspices of the Baird Trust, which also was founded in the interests of " orthodoxy," the Rev. Dr. Paterson, Dean of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Edinburgh, accepted a commission to deliver a course of lectures under the title, *The Substance and Standard of Christian Doctrine*, which were afterwards published under another title, *The Rule of Faith*. But he certainly showed greater regard for Dr. Hastie's universalism than for the " sound views " which the founder, James Baird of Cambusdoon,

personally favoured, and for the defence and propagation of which—not for the advance of theological science—he avowedly instituted his lectureship. The rule of Mr. Baird, a generous benefactor of the Church of Scotland, but no authority on theology, is one thing, the *Rule of Faith* another. Yet we have not heard that, for a breach of trust, either of these academic gentlemen was subjected to the harrow of persecution under which McGill was so long tortured.

Boston's theology, in his own time so popular, was in fact the theology of all Scotland—so popular that it is difficult for us of the present day to understand how it could have attained, and so long maintained, its popularity. But the explanation is not far to seek. For two hundred years it had been unchallenged, except by an occasional "heretic"; one generation of the clergy after another had hammered it deeper and deeper into the soul of a receptive people, until at last no one thought of disputing its Divinity, as the teaching of the Church and the Divinity Hall was then called, while the preachers themselves were nothing less than *Divines*. Happily its popularity began to wane in the eighteenth century, and has been declining ever since. Instead of being preached in every pulpit of the land, it is never heard now even in pulpits occupied by ministers consecrated to the *Confession*, the source from which Boston drew his inspiration.

CHAPTER VI

The McGill Process

From 1786 the *Essay* had been before the public, and many a criticism passed upon it, both by members of the Established Church and by outsiders; but, by the autumn of 1789, no action had been taken by the Courts. The Presbytery were evidently inclined to "let sleeping dogs lie." Having so long refrained from action, might they not now hug the assurance that the time for it was over and gone, and that the calm, broken only by ineffectual rumblings of dissent in various quarters, might continue yet awhile, or even for ever?

Some months, however, after the publication of his views on Creed-subscription, steps were taken to deal with the Essayist, who had now committed a second offence even more revolutionary than the first; but the proceedings began, not in the Presbytery, where they should have been initiated, but in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, whose interposition was a distinct rebuke to the lethargy of the inferior Court; and they began with the following overture:

"That whereas the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr are *the proper and appointed guardians* of the Protestant religion as by law established within their bounds, and whereas there is a *fama clamosa*

that certain books, which have been published by Dr. McGill, one of the ministers of the establishment at Ayr . . . contain certain doctrines contrary to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and his ordination vows, it is overtured that the Reverend Synod take this matter into serious consideration, and make such inquiry into the grounds thereof as to them shall seem proper."

"By a majority the Synod approved of the Overture, and enjoined the Ayr Presbytery, as the radical court, to inquire whether there were sufficient reasons for the *fama*, and to report to the next Synod. A minority, however, dissented, and appealed to the forthcoming General Assembly (1789), which quashed the judgment of the Synod, but instructed the Presbytery to take such steps as they should find necessary for preserving the purity of the doctrine of the Church, and the authority of her Standards."

"At a meeting in July following, the Presbytery accordingly appointed a Committee to examine the doctor's publications; which Committee in due time charged him with holding erroneous views on these five important points: The original and essential dignity of the Son of God; the doctrine of the Atonement by His sufferings and death; the priesthood and intercession of Christ; the method of reconciling sinners to God; and subscription to the Confession of Faith."

In the construction of their libel the Presbytery were not so stringent as, officially, they might and should have been; for there were articles of the *Confession* which the doctor had flatly denied, viz., "The Covenant of Works," "Predestination," and "Effectual Calling," of which denials they took no cognisance. So, even after the Presbytery had begun to move, they still continued to show a remnant of that reluctance which had induced the Synod to rouse them into action. They may have thought that, with its five counts, the libel was already heavily loaded, and that other three added

would have made the prosecution impracticable; but, by overlooking these additional offences, which certainly could not be said to be of a venial character, striking as they did at some of the essential doctrines of the Confession, they undoubtedly implicated themselves in the responsibility of the accused, and gave occasion for the question, *Quis custodiet custodes?* For years they had shirked the prosecution, and, when obliged by the higher court to take it up, they still shrank from a full discharge of their duty; and, in the course of the subsequent proceedings, even the Synod which set the ball rolling, continued to connive at the imperfect way in which the libel was drawn; so Presbytery and Synod alike failed to take full advantage of the opportunity afforded them for vindicating their own soundness in the faith.

When at last the rusty ecclesiastical machine, set in motion, began to creak, Burns, who, for reasons of his own, was deeply interested in Church life and strongly biased in favour of the Moderates, improvised *The Kirk's Alarm*, one of his most notable anti-clerical squibs, in which, feigning a deep concern for the safety of that institution, he ironically summons "the orthodox, wha believe in John Knox," to rouse themselves from their shameful indifference so as to avert an otherwise inevitable disaster. As at Trafalgar afterwards, so now every man, and especially every minister, was expected by Nelson's forerunner, "to do his duty."

Even to "Daddy Auld," who for various reasons well deserved the epithet, being his minister, his senior also by fifty years, and, moreover a strict disciplinarian by whom, for a grave offence, he had been officially rebuked, the poet addresses the accommodating appeal which left him without excuse for non-intervention, "Gif ye canna bite, ye may bark."

Of the "process" suffice it to say that, after a year's negotiations, in the course of which it passed shuttle-wise from Court to Court, a formal pact was at last secured by the help of some private manœuvring.

Of the final stage the following is the account given in the printed "Proceedings of the very Reverend the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, held at Ayr, 13th and 14th April, 1790":

"On the latter day the Synod was proceeding to ask parties whether they had anything to add to what had been already set forth by them in the papers transmitted and read the previous night, when it was moved:

> "That as Dr. McGill had shown a disposition to make some suitable acknowledgments, and to restore peace, a committee of a few ministers should be appointed to retire with him, and draw up what might appear to them a statement calculated to produce such a desirable end.

"Dr. McGill having expressed his desire that this measure should be adopted, the Synod appointed six ministers to retire along with him. And, Dr. McGill being allowed to withdraw his general answers to the report of the Committee of Presbytery, the appointed Committee of Synod retired accordingly, and took with them such of the papers relating to the cause as they

judged necessary. After some time the Committee returned, and reported that they found Dr. McGill disposed to act in every respect agreeably to his explanation before the Synod, and produced a declaration and apology by Dr. McGill."

"I am sorry," said he, "that my publications should have given offence to any of my brethren, or to the world. . . . I am sensible that there are ideas contained in these publications which *may appear improper*, and modes of expression ambiguous and unguarded, particularly respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God, the doctrine of the Atonement by His sufferings and death, the priesthood and intercession of Christ, the method of reconciling sinners to God, and subscription to the *Confession of Faith;* all which ideas I hereby disclaim, and for such expressions I am heartily sorry, and hereby declare my belief of these great articles, as they are laid down in the Standards of the Church."

Even at the last moment the author's modes of expression are still "ambiguous," but no longer "unguarded"; they are rather so artfully chosen as to be indefinite, and at some points open to a double interpretation. How much he did, and did not, retract; whether he was more sorry for the trouble he had brought on himself, or for the trouble he had caused to his brethren and "the world," doth not appear. Whether he blamed them for taking offence, or himself for giving it, remains a question. The most important part of his statement, and the clearest, is the closing sentence: "I hereby declare my belief of these great articles as they are laid down in the Standards of the Church"—which could not well be interpreted otherwise than as a general confession of his having wandered from the creed, and of his penitential return.

With regard to Creed-subscription, he was still unconvinced that it was a practice not to be maintained. "I have indeed," he says, "given my opinion that it would be better if it were laid aside, as it was for some centuries unknown to the Christian Church, and was not even practised in our own Church for many years after the *Confession of Faith* was adopted. But that is a political situation." Evidently he meant that, subscription being a "political" matter, his view on the subject should not be made a matter of ecclesiastical discipline. But, so long as the Church was established and supported by the State, the *Confession* had undoubtedly a political as well as an ecclesiastical significance. Even the five articles to which McGill renewed his allegiance were political, and enforced as such, if he could not have retained his place in the State Church unless he declared himself in agreement with them. It may well seem incongruous that the profound mysteries of the Faith which had been under discussion, belonging as they did to quite a different world from the political, or the Parliamentary, should yet be associated with politics, as they inevitably are in an *Established* Church.

That McGill was ever asked to explain how he had been led to change his views, and had all at once returned to a complete agreement with the *Confession* on the points whereon he had differed from it, there is indeed nothing to show; and it is truly

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remarkable that, after all the study bestowed on the composition of the *Essay*, and all the criticisms passed upon it in the press and in the Courts, by Burghers and Antiburghers, as well as members of his own Church, he did not announce or indicate, the slightest change in any of his opinions until, at the very last moment, he made a sudden and complete surrender.

In winding up the proceedings, the Synod, to emphasise their conclusion, ordered McGill's declaration and apology to be published by the Clerk; and to emphasise it still more, they ordered that, along with it, there should be published the section of the *Confession* respecting the "original and essential dignity of the Son of God," and also the one respecting the Atonement. These sections we submit to the reader that he may see the complicated character of the dogmatic statements to which McGill committed himself:

(1) "The Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion, which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man" (Confession viii. 2).

(2) "Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified, and did make a proper, real

and full satisfaction to His Father's justice. Yet, inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace might be glorified in the justification of sinners" (Confession xi. 3).

The agreement thus attained did not, however, actually end the protracted strife. Many, in different parts of the country, resented what was considered the leniency shown to the "heretic," and endeavoured to revive the prosecution, even introducing new counts into the libel; but everybody most intimately concerned being now sick of the controversy, they were baffled in the Presbytery, baffled in the Synod, and baffled in the General Assembly, which, in the summer of 1791, finally dismissed the case, on the ground that the complainants had no particular right or interest in the prosecution, and were seeking to re-open a closed question.

Thus the case, though it was so long continued, and had created a widespread and bitter controversy, in which Anti-burghers and Burghers, as well as the Church of Scotland, were deeply interested, and all took their full share, was unhappily followed by no compensatory advance in theology, the recantation leaving things just where they had been. The only effect of the prosecution was the very opposite of what the author of the *Essay* had intended, viz., the confirmation of the old orthodoxy, a fact to be regretted, for it certainly needed both revision and reform.

CHAPTER VII

Intervention of the Associate Synod of Glasgow

I

Dissatisfied with the conclusion of the "process," fretting and fuming, indeed, at the indifference to the doctrine of the Reformation, which, in their opinion, had now been, not for the first time in its history, displayed by the Church of Scotland, the Associate Synod of Glasgow resolved to take the matter up, and to perform, with all necessary rigour, the neglected functions of criticism, condemnation, and rebuke. They accordingly agreed to issue a protest, not against McGill alone, but also against the Church which harboured him, and which, by condoning them, implicated itself in his "heresies."

From the very beginning of its history, under the leadership of Ebenezer Erskine, the Secession had been slinging reproaches at the Established Church for its latitudinarianism. Even more than its indignant opposition to patronage, its concern for doctrinal purity, and especially for "the doctrines of grace," constituted the reason for its original and continued separation from the State Church. These doctrines, however, notwithstanding their fair name,

had for the majority of mankind only a sinister significance, in virtue of which they redounded neither to the glory of God's grace, nor to the glory of His justice; and, contrary to what was declared to be their divine intention, defeated both of these ends, being neither truly gracious nor truly just.

By its repeated manifestoes, as well as by the frequent renewal of the Scottish covenants on the part of its ministers, members and students, the Secession was more deeply committed to the *Confession* than the Church of Scotland had ever been. For that reason it became peculiarly hard, in later times, for the Secession to qualify its attitude towards the Presbyterian standards, and embrace a more liberal interpretation of the Gospel.

In the Associate Synod of Glasgow, the following motion was made on September 1st, 1791, and carried without a vote, as had been, in the previous year, the rehabilitation of McGill in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr—a dual fact, showing how, in regard to the same question, the two Synods were diametrically opposed to each other:

"Whereas it is a matter of notoriety that the Rev. William McGill, in Ayr, has vented a number of gross errors in a book entitled *A Practical Essay on the Death of Christ*, and that, on account of these errors, a process was commenced against him before the Courts of the Established Church, which process was issued without any censure being inflicted on the author, or any condemnation of his errors, and a second process, having been taken, was dismissed

by the General Assembly on this account that they held the matter to be already judged, it is humbly moved that this Synod should emit a warning against said errors, and show that the Established Church Courts have acted sinfully in the matter."

"That something might be done as speedily as possible the Synod appointed the Presbytery of Kilmarnock as a committee to prepare a draft of said warning, to be laid before the Synod at an interim meeting to be held in Glasgow."

Six months later, on March 6th, 1792, the draft was presented by the Rev. James Robertson, A.M., of Clerk's Lane, Kilmarnock. "The burden of composing it had," he said, "been left upon him; and though the members of the Presbytery had seen it, yet he had got little or no assistance from them." After long reasoning on two consecutive days, the Synod found that, owing to its length, "they had no time to examine it in detail, or to put it into the form appropriate to an Act; but after expressing their grateful sense of the labour employed and the abilities displayed by the author in their service, they appointed a committee of three, one of whom was the Moderator, to make what corrections of the *Overture* might appear to them necessary, and that it be put to press with all convenient speed."

On August 8th, after another interval of six months, the Synod called for the report of the Committee, who pleaded that, "through a variety of circumstances, they had not wholly transcribed

the document for the press, though they had made what corrections they deemed necessary." The Synod thereupon instructed the Committee to use all diligence in having it speedily published.

Revised and corrected by the Committee, the *Overture* still remained in all its essentials, and in its phraseology also, the work of Robertson. Before the year 1792 was out, the document was published at Paisley, with a preface giving an account of its origin, in a brochure of 103 octavo pages—a voluminous but belated reply to an Essay which appeared in 1786. Thus the *Overture*, instead of becoming an Act of the Associate Synod of Glasgow, took the form of a pamphlet, and thereby, no doubt, gained a much greater publicity.

As the chosen representative of the Provincial Synod of Glasgow, Robertson takes a more important place in the controversy than Jamieson, or Moir, or any other disputant speaking for himself alone. Born in 1750, the eldest son of Robert Robertson, a farmer in the parish of West Calder, he matriculated at Glasgow University in 1768; and in 1773 took the degree of Master of Arts, which was then not much in request. Divinity he studied at Whitburn, in the neighbourhood of Bathgate, under the Rev. Archibald Bruce, who, from 1768 to 1786, was sole Professor in the Antiburgher Theological Hall, and at the same time minister of the Antiburgher Church in the village. On September 1st, 1777, when

twenty-seven years of age, he was ordained at Kilmarnock the first minister of the Associate congregation, which, after many changes, affecting its theological position and its ecclesiastical connection, has been, since 1897, represented by Winton Place Evangelical Union Congregational Church. Fifteen years pass, and he emerges into public view a well-defined personality, a typical Seceder, a recognised exponent both of the principles and spirit of the denomination, its chosen champion indeed, thrust out upon a public arena to do battle with the most notable Moderate of the day, and in one of the most memorable controversies of the eighteenth century, of which there were in Scotland not a few. Although the questions then commanding the attention of the Scottish Churches were different from those uppermost in 1840, at the beginning of Mr., afterwards Principal, Morison's ministry (Moderatism having by that time fallen from its proud estate), there was yet a decided resemblance between the two periods in respect of the turmoil by which they were severally characterised, as also between the men themselves. For, though Robertson and Morison belonged to hostile camps, the one being as notable in his championship as the other in his challenge, of the *Confession*, both were zealous controversialists; both gifted with an effective pulpit style ; both, but in different degrees, scholarly men ; both the collectors of a large library ;

both the means under God of a religious awakening ; but the commotion caused by Morison's fervent evangelicalism, based on the universality of God's love to men as shown in an universal Atonement, was felt over a much wider area, evoking in all parts of the country thankful appreciation, on the one hand, for light and comfort received and, on the other, an intense antipathy as being a menace to the old " orthodoxy."

In Mackay's *History of Kilmarnock* there are seven anecdotes told to illustrate Robertson's eccentricities, no fewer than six of them deriving their point from some rustic simile or metaphor, while, of the freedom with which he at times bore down upon individuals in the pews, proof is given in the fact that four or five of his remembered sayings involve personalities which, in these days, would be reckoned intolerable offences. To the seven the writer is enabled to add an eighth, which came to him from the late Dr. Blair, of Dunblane :

" I have heard stories long ago of the eccentricities of Mr. Robertson. He used, in preparing for the pulpit, to spread out on the floor of his study his authorities, opened out at the text. So he began to talk to them: 'Let us see, Adam Clarke, what you say' ; and so on through several till he came to Matthew Henry, when he would say, ' Ay, ay, my lad, I was sure you would grip hold of the meaning.' "

It is said that he had a terrible dream that heresy had found its way into Clerk's Lane Church (his own), and had even entered the pulpit. If ever he had such a dream, to him it must have been terrible indeed; for, as we have seen, he was the foremost champion of "orthodoxy" that the Associate Synod of Glasgow could put into the field, at least from the Presbytery of Kilmarnock. But that he really had a dream which was fulfilled thirty years after his death, when James Morison was installed in his pulpit, may be doubted ; it may have been, like some other stories, a *vaticinium post eventum*. Even in that case, however, it would show a disposition to invest the first minister of Clerk's Lane with the gift of divination, a way which Scottish piety had of doing honour to its covenanting celebrities, and other favourites.

II

Charges of the Overture against McGill on the one hand, and the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr on the other.

The publication is divided into four parts, the first consisting mainly of a rehearsal of the McGill process, designed to show how it had been mismanaged throughout. But a certain indefiniteness is imparted to the narrative by the fact that, of the numerous speakers introduced, not one is mentioned by name. At the most, some are indicated by their initials ; with one or two exceptions, the reference is

so general that who they were no one can now say. There are leering allusions to "the orthodox gentlemen," to "a popular preacher from Glasgow," to "an old serious gentleman," to "a doctor," to "a great orator," to "another gentleman from whom much was expected." Even Dr. Dalrymple, who was generally respected, and whom Burns addresses thus,

"Your heart's like a child, your life like the new-driven snow,"

is held up to contempt as a trimmer, because of an act of devotion in which he engaged, when, one minister after another having declined the solemn function, he consented to offer to Almighty God an expression of the Synod's thankfulness for the peaceful issue in which the weary process had at last terminated. "He did not forget a use of lamentation, that the best-intended designs were not always so successful as could be desired, nor did he fail to add, 'There is even a naturalness in it!'" So into his "congratulatory address to the Deity," as Robertson styles the prayer, he contrived to smuggle an apology for his colleague's regrettable failure to accomplish the good he had intended, or that he himself had expected. One wonders whether, in expressing himself as he did, he had not in his mind the words of his friend the poet:

The best laid plans o' mice and men
Gang aft agley.

Nothing could have been more "natural."

(1) So changed is the present mode of conducting theological controversy from the manner which prevailed at the close of the eighteenth century, that the objurgatory style of Robertson, which is one of his most marked characteristics, offends our sense of propriety, consorting neither with the seriousness and sacredness of the issues at stake, nor with the religious character of the ecclesiastical organisation which he represented. Along with an abnormal propensity to denunciation, he displays, at times, strangely enough, a rather incongruous levity. The Committee, who revised his MS., characterised it as "ironical in some of its clauses, and as neither usual nor proper in Church Acts." Yet they plead, "Such a style has been successfully employed in the confutation of error and defence of truth." They also justify it as "having been used by the venerable Elijah, and other prophets of the Lord, also by some of the reformers, as Luther." But surely there is an enormous difference between the extemporaneous taunt of an ancient prophet and a treatise of more than one hundred quarto pages, written with deliberation, carefully revised by a Synodical committee, and finally approved by a Christian Synod, in the eighteenth century after Christ. Even the apology of the Committee for the style of their protagonist shows that, in their estimation, it was really open to criticism

Whatever good the protest was calculated to do, it must have been to a large extent, if not altogether, neutralized by the violence of its language, and the resentment it was bound to provoke.

(2) McGill, if we may believe his critic—himself not over-fastidious—" licks up the filthiness of error wherever he can find it." Further, "like most of the moderns, he is to be credited with a sovereign contempt of all systems, in virtue of which he glories in self-contradiction as a distinguished piece of theological heroism, and can be either Arian, Nestorian, or Socinian, as answers his convenience."

A choice example of the critic's inordinate love of nicknames is furnished by a remark regarding one of the opinions which he controverts: " You shall here find united the self-righteous Jew, the Christianised infidel, the Popish merit-monger, the proud Pelagian, the truckling, trimming Baxterian." Robertson's feeling towards Baxter seems to have been similar to Fraser's of Brea, who " abhorred, and was at enmity with, Mr. Baxter, as a stated enemy to the Grace of God "—Fraser insisting so strongly on justification by faith, and faith alone, that, in his eyes, antinomianism, if an error at all, was one that " lay very near to the truth," while Baxter (to quote from the late Dr. Alexander Whyte) " was so set upon preaching, and pressing home, the absolute necessity of a holy life that he seemed to some to lay far too little weight on the

sovereign grace of God, and on the imputed righteousness of Christ."

Since the days of St. Paul and St. James there have always been good men differing thus; and possibly, to the end of time, such differences will continue to be. But why should the one set denounce the other, when faith without works, and works without faith, are equally dead?

(3) The "heretic" is also charged at one time with a display of the "most shameful ignorance," or, what is worse, "insidious and calumnious falsehood"; at another, with "most profane ignorance and unparalleled assurance"; and yet another, with "a most malicious keenness against the doctrine of Scripture." In one passage his critic detects "the deadly poison of Socinian heresy, wrapped up in part with serpentine cunning; in part discharged with the boldness of the most determined enemy"; and in another, "the quintessence of detestable nonsense and damnable error." What is the aggregate significance of all these envenomed charges, each intensified to the uttermost? If any one man deserved them all, his proper place would be either in Bedlam, or in Hades; and if any one would, without cause, hurl such indictments at another, he would no less deserve to be banished from the society of honest men.

(4) Another offence laid to the charge of McGill is "enthusiasm," and especially "*Methodistic*

enthusiasm," not in the favourable sense which the latter word originally bore, and again bears to-day, but as a term of disparagement, denoting an uncontrolled emotionalism, the sense in which it was commonly used in the eighteenth century, by Burns e.g., in his epistle to John Goldie :

> Enthusiasm's past redemption,
> Gane in a gallopin' consumption :
> Not a' her quacks, wi' a' their gumption,
> Can ever mend her ;
> Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption,
> She'll soon surrender.

The followers of Wesley were also, by Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, called " a dangerous and presumptuous sect, animated with an *enthusiastical and fanatical spirit.*" But, whereas Burns associates " enthusiasm " with " sour bigotry," " glowrin' superstition," and " auld orthodoxy," Robertson sneers at it in the name of that very " orthodoxy " which, to the poet, was itself synonymous with bigotry and superstition. Most unexpectedly, therefore, the friend and the foe of Moderatism for once appear to agree ; for Moderatism was generally known, not by its " enthusiasm," but rather by a careful avoidance of all emotional excess. Ecstasy, or " high-flying " of any kind, was entirely foreign to its nature. Robertson, then, must have been ill to please when, on the one hand, he condemns the Kirk for its lukewarmness, and on the other tilts at Wesley and Whitefield, who, with

hearts aflame, had gone everywhere preaching the Gospel, and with such effect that not only in Britain, but beyond the Atlantic, they did much to stem the indifference, irreligion, and immorality which, in their time, so greatly and so widely prevailed. It even looks as if, for the moment, Robertson and McGill had exchanged parts, when Robertson scorned Methodism, and McGill spoke like a Wesley or a Whitefield.

The ground on which the charge of "enthusiasm" was preferred against the *Essayist* was of the slightest: simply this, that Robertson, with a low estimate even of regenerated human nature, deemed it an unwarrantable extravagance to attribute to any one "a prevailing habit of innocence and virtue." But what is Christianity worth, and wherein lies the value of the new birth, if it does not create and secure such a habit? The *Confession*, it is true, is far from being sanguine, or optimistic, in its definition of regeneration and its results, though it conceives it as wholly and solely the work of God Himself; for it admits, or rather insists, that even the regenerate may fall into grievous sin, and also for a time continue therein. Is it the case, then, that the Westminster divines, even with their doctrine of "irresistible grace," and Robertson, who took them as his masters, were less enthusiastic, in the good sense, than the first disciples of Christ; than St. Paul, e.g., who "gloried" in the Cross; who

exulted in the Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"; who confidently declared that, "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things become new"? Was the apostle of the Gentiles, speaking thus, unduly optimistic? Is it really Utopian to expect that *enthusiasm*, which properly means the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the soul of man, and is a privilege conferred on every true believer, should be, and will be, accompanied by a prevailing habit of innocence and virtue? To expect anything less were to debase the Christian standard of morality, and to proclaim the Gospel an ineffectual remedy for human depravity.

Thus the "orthodox" and "evangelical" critic ladles out his condemnation right and left, with an indiscriminating profusion, exciting resentment chiefly, or solely, against himself, and disposing the reader to take under his protection the miscellaneous objects of his unmeasured obloquy. If for the "Baxterian" he has no epithets but truckling and trimming, and for the "enthusiasm" of the Methodist no tribute but a sneer, may he not be equally unjust toward other offenders, "the self-righteous Jew," "the Christianized infidel," "the proud Pelagian," "the treacherous Socinian," and "the self-contradictory Arminian"?

(5) His captiousness he displays yet once more

when he objects to the statement of McGill, that "Almighty God deigned to tabernacle with men in a person of their own order, and to manifest His power, wisdom and goodness in a man like themselves"—which looks very like an innocent and perfectly justifiable paraphrase of the words of the Fourth Gospel—"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That we are not explaining the language of McGill in a way foreign to his intention is evident from the fact that, in another place, quoted by Robertson himself, he does speak of Jesus Christ as "Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh." And in the very sentence next to the one in which he speaks of Almighty God as deigning to tabernacle with men in "a person of their own order," he, as Robertson again points out, speaks of Christ as a "Divine Person." Yet, instead of welcoming the expression the critic sees in it only an illustration of the heretic's hopeless inconsistency! He cannot forgive him for calling Jesus in one sentence a "Person of our own order," and in the next a "Divine Person."

Yet once again he displays an abnormal scent for heresy when he discovers it in an exclamation of adoring loyalty: "How glorious is it to us that one of our own kind, the man Christ Jesus, is advanced to universal empire over angels, as well as men!" May not one, then, be allowed to speak of Jesus as a "person of our own kind," not even

although Scripture itself designates Him "the man Christ Jesus"; and, in that capacity, declares Him "the one Mediator between God and men, who gave Himself a ransom for all"; and although St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, could speak of Him as "a man approved of God"? To found a charge of heresy on these tortured expressions of McGill's is to make Scripture itself heretical! Had Robertson and his associates treated the Bible as they did the *Practical Essay*, they would have insisted on the necessity of a new edition, purged of all those indiscreet or heretical passages, which, by recording the various uncertainties, inquiries, and temptations of Jesus, bear undeniable testimony to His human limitations; and those also which expressly speak of Him as "a man," and so far recognise Him as "a being of our own kind or order"!

While affirming, as "most unquestionable," that McGill is a Socinian on the great doctrine of atonement for sin, Robertson admits that "his real sentiments upon the doctrine of the Trinity are *not so plainly declared*." "Sometimes he speaks like a *Socinian*, at other times as a *Nestorian*, but more frequently, we apprehend, he discovers himself to be of the *Arian* band." But, knowing the style of Robertson, I would suggest that, had he been quite sure that McGill had no fixed perception of the person of Christ, but was Socinian, Nestorian, and Arian, by turns, with a preference for Arianism, he

would not have been content to say he "apprehended" that such was the case. Evidently he was not fully convinced of the Arianism any more than of the Socinianism, or the Nestorianism, which he lays to the charge of the "heretic." And it is still more certain that neither McGill nor any other, whatever his aptitude for heresy, could have entertained, at one and the same time, those three conflicting forms of Christological belief or unbelief!

What Robertson has established to our complete satisfaction is his own uncharitableness, and an excessive eagerness in the cause of a traditional orthodoxy, which betray him into a series of injustices toward his neighbour, and make him, in certain respects, an enemy of the very truth he professed to serve.

(6) Summing up the whole process against McGill, the protagonist of the Associate Synod of Glasgow characterises it as "the FAMOUS FARCE of the prosecution of one of the ministers of Ayr for an impudent attack upon the most fundamental articles of revealed religion, and of his own *Confession of Faith*." Instead of being what the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr affected to call it, "a measure calculated to promote peace and truth in their Church," "it was certainly an infamous burial of the truth of the Gospel, in which some popular orthodox gentlemen had the honour of being the principal pall-bearers and chief mourners, and an

Ario-Socinian (Dalrymple) had the distinguished gratification of saying the funeral service over this crucified enemy of his peace and comfort." In the same strain he goes on to say: "Of all the inquiries relative to the erroneous (as Simpson [sic], Campbell, Wishart, Leechman, or Ferguson) which have been begun for upwards of seventy years past in the Established Church, this has been the *most shameful mockery of God and man*"; and then he adds, "Some of us were never witnesses to anything which had more the appearance of a judicial infatuation than the conduct of the popular party in this court at this time."

(7) If the severe censures thus passed on the process as a whole were not in substantial accordance with the truth, then Robertson, who took it upon him to expose the dishonesty, as well as the heresy, of McGill and his supporters, must have been himself an arrant offender, not only against charity, but against truth and justice, and also, to use one of his own favourite expressions, a "detestable hypocrite." Moreover, the Committee of the Glasgow Provincial Synod, who revised and approved his lucubration, and the Synod itself, which sanctioned its publication, must share his inevitable reproach. In direct proportion to their own professed regard for "the truth," and to the indignation which they affected over the dishonour done to it, the blow they struck, not at McGill merely, but at the Church

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which harboured him, would recoil with a shattering violence upon their own heads. If, on the other hand, the history of the case, and the judgment pronounced upon it, be substantially correct, there must have been on the part both of the Presbytery of Ayr and of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, a lamentable amount of intrigue and insincerity. In the one case the Secession, in the other, the Church of Scotland, would emerge from the affair grievously discredited. On which side, then, falls the merited reproach? Does the *Overture*, notwithstanding its high pretensions, present a distorted and misleading view of the facts, and so inflict an unwarranted censure on the Church of Scotland? Or was that Church really guilty of the gross betrayal which the *Overture* laid to its charge?

(8) From Robertson's denunciation of the "process" as a "FAMOUS FARCE," one might have been tempted to infer that the "heretic" had been allowed to leave the Court without offering either an apology for his doctrinal offences, or a promise of future conformity to the creed. The fact, however, is that, before the case concluded, he was required to renew, and did renew, his adherence to "the great articles" in regard to which he had been impeached, and to these as "laid down in the Standards of the Church." This important fact, instead of giving it the prominence which it deserved, Robertson relegated to a mere foot-note, thus doing an injustice

both to McGill and his Church, and laying himself open, in some degree, to the charge of *suppressio veri*. In justification of his severe judgment on the way the case had been conducted, he complains that " no one member of the Synod ever proposed to bring the panel to an explicit acknowledgment of any of his pernicious errors ; no one proposed even the lowest degree of censure ; no one moved that he should be warned against venting such doctrines afterwards." These allegations, previously made, and also sustained, in the Associate Synod of Glasgow constituted the reason for their protest and warning, But, for all that, they were contrary to truth ; for, as we have seen, McGill was not allowed to go free until he had declared his re-acceptance of the articles of the *Confession relative to the Person and Work of Christ*. The Synod, therefore, could not be reasonably charged with indifference to the creed, still less with " an infamous burial of the truth of the Gospel." Nor could it be justly averred that no one had proposed to bring the panel to an explicit acknowledgment of any of his errors ; for, whether on his own initiative or not, he retracted every one of them in a way satisfactory to the Synod ; and what had the Court then to do but to accept his apology ? Or were they to tell him to his face they could not believe him ? If a man's profession is no guarantee of his good faith, creed-subscription is a futility. In Robertson's eyes it was apparently

a small humiliation, none at all indeed, that McGill was required to renew his allegiance to the Confession! But, if he thought so, how many will agree with him? and what manner of persons would they be who did? What could really be more humiliating to a preacher, a pastor, a scholar, a leader, and a would-be theological reformer, than to take his stand on the "stool of repentance," and abjure his own laboured production?

Having escaped from the toils of the Court, and resumed his place in the Church, the accused goes down to posterity, not as one who gallantly broke away from the trammels of the creed, but as one who, having made an abortive effort to emancipate himself, voluntarily thrust his head once more into the halter. So henceforth let no man call him Socinian, or Pelagian, or Arminian, or Nestorian, or Arian, or Baxterian, but simply a waverer who, by his recantation, cancelled not a little of what he had written that was worthy to live, and would have served as an antidote to some of the "heresies" of the current "orthodoxy." Fortunately all that he had penned remains in type to this day.

CHAPTER VIII

"Orthodox" and "Heterodox" Presuppositions

The antagonists, as is generally the case when contemporaries differ, shared certain pre-suppositions common to them and their times which no longer rank as axiomatic. Both, for example, appeal to Scripture in support of their respective beliefs, even when these clash; both frequently misinterpret and misapply the texts to which they appeal, adducing "proofs" from psalms and prophecies which were then not so well understood as they now are. Both accept the historicity of the first three chapters of *Genesis*, reading a great deal into them, however, especially the second and the third, and assigning to what they smuggle into the text all the authority conceded to the text itself.

For long it has been evident to intelligent readers that the two accounts of the Creation (ch. 1-2^{3} and ch. 2$^{4-25}$) do not admit of reconciliation. The third chapter has no greater claim to be historical than either of the preceding chapters to be scientific. But, as the result of protracted debate in the domains of science and literature, the popular mind is now much more familiar with the character

of the conflicting records of the Creation than with the true value of the story of the Fall, a fact to be regretted, since the latter has always been more intimately associated with theology than the former —the consequence being that many still read the story of the Fall, believing not merely in the primeval tragedy reported in *Genesis*, but in all the gratuitous horrors superadded by a speculative but unenlightened imagination.

Both Robertson and McGill shared the common belief that, in the case of man, death is not the necessary consequence of his original constitution, but part of the penalty of Adam's sin, with this important difference, that, in McGill's estimation, death which was " the fruit of man's first disobedience" was simply corporal, whereas Robertson understood by it death in the Bostonian sense, death " in its full latitude and extent," i.e. death affecting his whole being, soul and body, and entailing on both an extremity, and also an eternity, of woe. It was rather to his credit that McGill discarded the commonly accepted dogma, that, in addition to all the miseries of this life, Adam's posterity inherited a total depravity, and an everlasting liability to the pains of hell. The opinion, however, which he embraced, that physical death, universal among all other terrestrial creatures, bears in mans' case alone a penal character, is only a modification of the more drastic hypothesis, that the consequences of Adam's

sin are of the far-reaching character associated with them in " the Covenant of Works."

In principle, therefore, it lies open to the same objection as the " orthodox " theory of the infinitely extended consequences of the broken Covenant. So, while renouncing the " Covenant of Works," McGill seems to admit a compact between God and Adam after all ; for to Adam's sin he traces not his death merely, but his posterity's also. To him, as to the " orthodox," death is not the natural and inevitable result of man's original constitution, but an abnormal, yet universal, occurrence in human experience, due to a special enactment of the divine will, consequent on the first sin of the first man, which debases his original constitution, and so thoroughly that, whereas, but for sin, death would never have happened either to him or his offspring, it is, always has been, and always will continue to be, as universal as if the seed of death had been from the first implanted in the human organism. Even in the threat addressed to our first parents, " In the day thou eatest of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt surely die," " there was," he says, " a plain intimation that man was originally designed for immortality." On that supposition, death is to the human race nothing less than a curse, and the most effectual of all, since no one in any generation, or in any land, escapes it. However, the immediate death with which Adam was

threatened did not overtake him, if he really lived 930 years as he is said to have done (*Gen.* 5^5)—

When (in *Genesis* 3^{9ff}) God confronts the offender to pronounce judgment on him, He does not address him as, in accordance with His threat, He might have been expected to do: thus—"Thou hast presumed to eat of the forbidden tree. To-day therefore, yea, this very day, thou shalt die." On the contrary, God assumes that his life will be spared, and indefinitely prolonged; but instead of subsisting on the spontaneous fruits of the earth, he would eat his bread in the sweat of his face. Only after unfolding to him the prospect of a hard struggle for subsistence, necessitated by natural impediments, does the divine Avenger refer to the question of death, which, in view of what (if the report be true) had previously passed between them, might have been expected to be the first and principal, if not the only, topic suitable to the moment; and then He refers to it, not as the penalty of his transgression, but rather as the natural and inevitable close of a life which was of the earth, earthy: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

In his posthumous work, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, Professor Denney deviates further than McGill from the track of orthodoxy, when he admits that death, in the ordinary sense, is simply a natural and inevitable event: "As far as we can

see, death, in the biological sense, is part of the mechanism of what we call life; it is an essential wheel in the course of nature, and we can conceive no natural system, no system of birth and growth, in which decay and death should not also have their place."[1]

Three years later, Professor Robert Mackintosh, of Lancashire Congregational College, gave expression to a similar view in his *Historical Theories of Atonement*: "Physically, death can now scarcely be regarded as the effect of sin. Whatever force a theologian may put upon his thoughts, that belief in the long run will prove impossible henceforward for men of honest and open mind."[2]

In view of the way the book of *Genesis* is now known to have originated, by piecing together documents produced by different authors at different times, and of the character of its contents, which consist partly of mere folk-lore, it is impossible to believe that the third of *Genesis* supplies the *ipsissima verba* of conversations between God and Adam, between Eve and the serpent, or between God and the guilty pair. To build a theology on the assumption that the story of the Fall is strictly historical were to build on an exceedingly precarious foundation; and to build, not on that chapter, but on a pile rendered more insecure by a superstructure of later speculation, is a still more perilous piece of theological architecture. Yet the

[1] p. 210. [2] p. 292.

tragedy of Eden, as amplified in the course of ages, is not mere folk-lore; it forms the basis of creeds deliberately framed, not by individuals, or local conventions, but by œcumenical Councils, and endorsed by all the churches of Christendom.

While McGill and Robertson both appeal to *Genesis* as a divine record of man's creation, they differ widely in their idea of the condition in which he began his existence. The former "held it impossible for a frail and fallible creature such as man, endowed with animal passions, as well as reason, and allied by the constitution of his nature both to angels and brutes, to secure his happiness for ever by his own perfect obedience"; and for that reason, assuming that, when created, man was "frail and fallible," even as he now is (which, surely, is no outrageous supposition), he repudiated "the Covenant of Works." Robertson, on the other hand, makes bold to say that "*God made man in a state of moral perfection*"—a proposition simply inconceivable; for even by the Almighty no one can be instantly endowed with such a character, that being a crowning glory, which, if a man ever attain it, he must acquire by patient continuance in well-doing, yet never can by his own unaided efforts, but only by the grace of God continually inspiring, directing and upholding him.

Man, as he was, when God entered into the alleged "covenant" with him, Robertson describes

in the following figure of speech : " He was not like one learning to draw characters, or form letters, and fit only to scribble at the law, but like one fully instructed, and fit to write out perfectly in his life that law which God his Maker had written on his heart." To put the matter in a simpler form, he was perfectly able to translate the perfect law of God into a perfect life ! So it would appear that he was subject not to a single prohibition merely, which is all that *Genesis* mentions, but to the whole moral law, an infinitely greater obligation, to which, nevertheless, *Genesis* makes not the slightest allusion. Following the *Confession*, " This law," says Boston, " was the very same which was afterwards summed up in the ten commandments, and promulgated on Mount Sinai to the Israelites." But, going far beyond the warrant of the *Confession*, he was reckless enough to assert " that the law, imposed on man in Eden, was no other than the eternal, indispensable law of righteousness observed in all points by the second Adam." So, to our amazement, we are told that the righteousness required of the first Adam, a mere man, a mere child indeed, in whom there existed as yet only the possibilities of manhood, was identical with that required of the second Adam, who, at the very least, was man in the height of His perfection, a man whom no other has ever approached in excellency. " God gave to Adam," says the *Confession*, " a law as a covenant of works,

by which He bound him and all his posterity to personal, *entire*, *exact* and *perpetual* obedience. This law, after his Fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, and as such was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commands."[1] Thus the law imposed on Adam is by the *Confession* identified with the Decalogue; and by Boston, the Decalogue is identified with the perfect righteousness which Christ both taught and exemplified; and as the character of Christ is a pattern of perfection to all ages, the standard of duty imposed on man has been, and will be, the same for all time! There is, therefore, no advance between Adam and Moses, and none between Moses and Christ, nothing but a dead uniformity of obligation from first to last, which is utterly contrary to the teaching of history, and of the Bible itself, leaving no room at all for human progress, and none even for successive revelations of the divine will. The moral law fit for a world of two individuals is not at all fit for the population of the world to-day.

If expected to be as righteous as Christ was, when He appeared thousands of years afterwards, what wonder if Adam failed! If he did fail, he was certainly not without excuse; nor did he merit the dreadful curse which he is said to have brought on himself and his posterity. But what warrant does *Genesis* supply for such a wild assertion regarding

[1] *Confession of Faith*, xix, 1, 2.

the responsibility of the first man? The proof advanced by the Westminster divines is simply a quotation from *Gen.* 1^{26-27}: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .; and God created man in His own image" . . . If this means that man was morally perfect from the first, he was "exempted from a law to which," as the late Principal Forsyth remarked, "even Jesus was subject, viz., that we must win our greatest legacies, and appropriate by toil and conflict our best gifts." For did He not grow in *wisdom*, and was not He "*made perfect by the things which He suffered*"? It is God, and not man, that is responsible for the Fall, if He required of the novice a righteousness which even Christ's did not surpass.

That, at his creation, man was not only imperfect in knowledge, but altogether without it, being simply endowed with the capacity for acquiring it by a laborious and sustained endeavour, even as he is to-day, and always has been; and that, by reason of inevitable infirmity, he needed grace not merely after his Fall, but from the first, and especially from the first, is much more in keeping with modern ideas of man's origin; with the evolutionary hypothesis as a whole, and also with the history, both biological and psychological, of every human being; the only hypothesis, indeed, that commends itself to men of science nowadays. At what point, if anywhere, could the "irresistible grace" which

in Calvinism plays such an important part, have been brought to bear upon man to greater advantage than at the moment of his first temptation, if at that crisis, there depended on his stability or instability, immeasurable consequences of good or evil, both for himself and his descendants? But at that supremely critical moment it was *not* applied, or sin would not have entered the world when it did.

The Story of the Fall we owe, not to the author of the first Creation-narrative, which informs us that man *was made in the image of God*, and after all the other creatures subordinate to him; but to the author of *the second account*, who, by the very character and contents of his narrative, shows himself the less intelligent of the two, inasmuch as he inverts the true order of Creation, making man the first, not the last, of God's works, the consequence being that man is ushered into a world where no preparation has been made for his advent, no mate provided for him, nor food even of any kind, neither animal nor vegetable having been as yet created; whereas in the first narrative things follow in a due and natural order, culminating in man, and all answer promptly and infallibly to the divine fiat.

In the second, the thought of a wife as a necessity for Adam, if he was to be the progenitor of the race, does not occur to the Creator at the first; and when it does occur, and He wants to make good His omission, He fails in a belated and fantastic attempt

to provide him with a suitable partner from among the lower creatures, by gathering around him the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and to a second experiment He needs to have recourse before He finally succeeds; so that Burns has really the warrant of the second chapter of *Genesis*, if not the first, for saying, "Nature tried her 'prentice hand on man," and then at last, but not without difficulty and more than one attempt, succeeded in making a lass!

In the first of the narratives God invests man, His masterpiece, with an unrestricted lordship over His other works, and forbids him not the knowledge which, indispensable to his own well-being, was also a condition of his beneficent rule over the lower creatures. He rather, by implication, encouraged him to exercise his mental powers to the utmost, that he might be qualified for his high commission as God's vice-regent on the earth; for how, without "the knowledge of good and evil," could he discharge the great and honourable task with which he was entrusted? For these reasons the first Creation-narrative approves itself the more intelligent, as it certainly is the more sublime.

If the story of the Fall had come to us through a medium which, in its account of the order of creation, displays an inferior intelligence, are we not justified in expecting indications of a similar defect when it deals with the higher subjects of man's Probation, Fall and Ruin?

McGill's view of the first man's limitations, and of the necessarily restricted responsibility attached to these, is quite out of keeping with the awful penalty which "orthodoxy," with its conception of Adam as a superman, associated with his initial transgression. On any conception, indeed, of the first man, however poorly or richly he may have been mentally endowed, it is hard to accept the tremendous consequences of his one act of disobedience, especially in view of the nature of the one prohibition which he disobeyed. And if, declining McGill's modest estimate of the mental and moral capacity of the first man, we have recourse to the Darwinian hypothesis, which makes it impossible, by a sharp line of demarcation, to distinguish between a creature advancing towards manhood by imperceptible gradations and one actually possessed of the indubitable characteristics of humanity, where, in the long process, shall we find the point at which a crisis such as the "Covenant of Works," or anything like it, could have been interpolated, with all its overwhelming consequences? What we have to recognise, if we accept the doctrine of evolution, is not a false and ruinous step on the part of the first parents of our race, but rather, at some point unknown, a most auspicious turn in their fortunes, which switched them on to a new line of development, and gave them an ever-increasing advantage over other terrestrial creatures and competitors—a turn which,

if accomplished by natural means, shows the more clearly how unfathomable are the resources of Nature and Nature's God.

Which of these two ideas, then, is the more in keeping with the Divine wisdom and goodness—the idea that, at his creation, man was endowed with a perfect moral character and, in spite of it, instantly fell; or that, under God's wise and benevolent guidance and guardianship, he slowly emerged from fellowship with the brute (some traces of which he still retains) into the partial possession of some Godlike attributes, constituting him a moral and responsible being; that, in virtue of his humble origin, he, from the first, needed divine grace, and also received it, to save him from relapsing into the brute, and to enable him to make, in the course of ages, that wonderful, and almost incredible, progress which he has achieved in the face of difficulties both innumerable and immeasurable?

Had the first man been created, as alleged, with a *perfect moral character*, there certainly would have been no Fall; for a really perfect man would have been incorruptible, and impeccable. In a moral perfection produced as Adam's is said to have been, by a pure act of Omnipotence, there could be no stability and, therefore, no durability. So far from being perfect in character from the first, Adam was really so imperfect that he could not even retain his original status, and succumbed to his first

temptation. What could more clearly prove that perfect he was not, and never had been?

So many and so serious are the difficulties attendant on the orthodox doctrine of Creation and the Fall that, in comparison with them, even those still attendant on Darwinism deserve to be spoken of with bated breath. Could the adherents of the old Theology only realise the monstrosities it involves, they might, instead of denouncing the Darwinian hypothesis, welcome it as, after all, the more reasonable alternative, being more consistent with the glory of God, the course of Nature, and the inextinguishable hopes and aspirations of humanity, which, far from being ineffectual, have, by the help of God, resulted in great achievements, more miraculous by far than many so-called miracles!

CHAPTER IX

The Nature of Christ's Sufferings

Speaking of our Lord's experience in Gethsemane, Dr. McGill suggested that "it might have arisen in part from an apprehensiveness about the difficulty of maintaining a becoming temper and deportment under such unexperienced and awful trials as did now present themselves to Him"; and to illustrate that observation, he added: "Certain it is that, in the most innocent and virtuous characters among men, the bias of animal nature will sometimes draw contrary to duty, and the senses and passions will discover a reluctance sufficient to call forth painful exertions of moral and religious principle in order to perform what is right." "The blessed Jesus," he adds, in words reminding us of *Heb.* 2^{11}, "was made like unto us, though more pure and perfect." But this suggested cause of the agony limits quite unwarrantably the range and variety of the experiences which entered into it. Besides, it is modestly recognised by its author as proffering no more than a possible and partial explanation. But, as there were other and more obvious causes at work, it scarcely deserves even the qualified importance which he attached to it. The difficulty of maintaining "a becoming temper

and deportment " in the circumstances—extremely trying though they were—was not a concern wholly worthy of our Lord ; if a concern to Him at all, it was certainly not the chief.

The simplest explanation is the manifold suffering already pressing in upon Him from every side, and straining His powers of endurance to the utmost, coupled with the prospect of still more and still greater suffering on the morrow. His burden He had always been, and was still, willing to bear ; but even to *His* power of endurance there was a limit. The kindly apology—" The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak "—which He offered on behalf of His three attendant disciples, applied to Himself as well as to them, and probably originated in the very experience through which He had been, and still was, passing.

Instead of endeavouring to account for the agony simply by an hypothetical apprehensiveness, the author seeks to shed additional light upon it by including it in a class of experiences not uncommon even among men of the noblest character, when driven to the limit of their endurance, or even beyond it. Both explanations, whatever their worth, singly or unitedly, were certainly intended, not to detract from the character of the Saviour, but to vindicate it, by showing that His anguish was perfectly compatible with the highest degree of " innocence and virtue."

The Nature of Christ's Sufferings

Whatever were the elements mingling in His cup of woe, it is certain that the Holy Sufferer recoiled from it with a strong aversion. But of the alternatives between which He wavered—whether the cup should be removed from Him, or He should have to drink it to the dregs—He was prepared for either, when once it was made clear to Him which really was the Father's will. So, in His prayers and whole demeanour, His humanity makes itself clearly manifest; on the one hand, by the confession of the limited knowledge implied in the qualifying clause of His prayer, "*If it be possible*"; and on the other by His limited power of endurance, attested by His urgent and importunate supplications. As interpreted, however, by Robertson, McGill's merely tentative and confessedly partial, explanation is invested with a decidedly sinister significance: "It plainly implies," said he, "that Christ had a mixture of sinful fear, and an unbecoming deficiency in faith, courage and confidence in God; that He had a bias at least somewhat corrupt, and that He was, to a certain extent, under the influence of passions opposite to duty; so that he here makes Him a person of our own order in point of imperfection." In all this we have an example of criticism at once uncritical and uncharitable, and of that base wresting of words which is not uncommon among unscrupulous controversialists, posing as champions of truth or orthodoxy.

Whether the cup did, or did not, contain insufferable elements secretly infused by the Father's hand, is a question which played a part in the controversy too important to be overlooked. By pious Hebrews grievous sufferings, though grievous wrongs, were frequently, or even generally, interpreted as dispensations of the Almighty, of which habit Christ Himself gave an example when, in the overheated furnace of Gethsemane, to which the wrath of man contributed no small part of the fuel, He prayed, "*Thy* will be done," Among the causes of our Lord's distress, McGill takes no account, as an "orthodox" expositor of the day would have done, of God's hiding His face from Him, or inflicting secret torments on His soul; to him "such an attitude and action on the part of the Father toward the Son seemed injurious to the character of God, and not agreeable to the truth of Gospel history." Moreover, he adds, "in the depth of His agony, Christ did not consider Himself as suffering under the divine indignation, nor was there any reason why He should, since it is certain that He was never more the object of His Father's love than at this very time."

Therein, however, lay the head and front of His offending.

But if his suggestions as to the cause, or causes, of the agony of Christ were open to dispute, no less, but even more so, was the current interpretation, that His suffering was divinely and directly inflicted

upon Him as surety for the elect. "The curse," said Moir of Tarbolton, "did not proceed from the malice of men; they could not make our blessed Lord a curse, nor was it the act of infernal spirits. It was the act of God, which He immediately put forth on the soul of our Redeemer, whereby He deeply pierced and put Him to grief."

Such a view may, at the first glance, seem to have some justification in Christ's own language: "My God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken me"? Among the Jews it was a common belief that all suffering was penal, and as such proceeded from God the Avenger, of which we have an example in the question addressed to Jesus by one of His own disciples: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"[1]

Though condemned by Christ, this speculation was yet endorsed sixteen centuries afterwards by the Westminster divines in their *Larger Catechism*, which includes among the "punishments of sin in this world, *all evils* that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations and employments, together with death itself."[2] Judged by that dogma, Jesus was either a sinner suffering for His own sins, as He was in the eyes of the Jews; or, as He was in the eyes of orthodox Calvinists, the sinless Son of God, suffering under the Father's chastening hand for the sins of "His people." In the latter case the Father was

[1] John 9[2].

[2] Question 28.

sustaining at one time two relations to the Son, not only diverse but diametrically opposite—one of infinite complacency, and the other of "infinite wrath." But how was it possible even for God, at one time, and toward the same person, to combine affections so antagonistic to each other? How could He really be so infuriated, or infuriated at all, against one who was always and wholly obedient to His will? And if He could not be really angry with Him, how could He even feign to be so?

Those who would explain the agony of Christ as a vicarious chastisement meted out to Him with a perfect precision, corresponding in extent and intensity to the collective guilt of the elect, should be able to state, with greater definiteness than they have ever yet done, wherein it consisted. To say, as we are so often told, that the Father "hid His face from the Son," or "bruised" Him, or "put Him to grief," is to offer us a mere figure of speech, which makes us none the wiser. Till these expressions are replaced by others, which are in a real, and no merely metaphorical, sense, applicable to God, and at the same time intelligible to men, the Passion, whether in the Garden or on the Cross, remains unexplained.

As we are now approaching holy ground, let us doff our sandals and reverently meditate on that mysterious cry which Jesus uttered just before He gave up the ghost: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

At once a humble inquiry and a faint but reverent remonstrance, it suggests, in a general way, an explanation of His distress, viz., that God, still *His* God, however, had for some inscrutable reason abandoned Him. Such an explanation, however, did not satisfy Jesus, nor does it satisfy us. It rather compels us to raise two questions, not only *Why*? but also *How*? Unjust it would be, yea, eminently so, to pass judgment on one evidently *in extremis*, as Jesus was when He asked, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" and fail to take full cognizance of his peculiar condition and circumstances at the moment—His body lacerated by the lash,[1] and racked for six weary hours by its suspension on the cross; His brain not clear and calm, but troubled, or even muddled, by the torment He had undergone, and was still undergoing; His heart crushed, and ready to break, as He pondered how He had been deserted and betrayed by false friends to whom, for years, He had shown all possible kindness; harassed, too, by unscrupulous enemies in official places, who should have defended Him from insult and outrage; but who, altogether oblivious of the duty incumbent upon them, connived at, or even instigated, the indignities done by the mob and its ringleaders to His Sanctity and His Majesty.

To have judged Christ at that moment as wholly divine, or even as a man with "a sound mind in

[1] Matt. 27^{26}

a sound body," and then interpreted His question as a deliberate charge of unfaithfulness against the Father, would have displayed an utter lack of justice, reason and sympathy.

That one who had foreseen, and more than once foretold, His violent death, and latterly lived in full anticipation of the awful tragedy, should at last shrink from, and even protest, though mildly, against a fate He had freely accepted, may seem an inconsistency. That He who rebuked Peter so sharply for deprecating the announcement that He would suffer many things at the hands of the Jewish authorities and be persecuted even unto death, should now find, in the perfect fulfilment of His own prediction, a greater stumbling-block than Peter offered Him with his remonstrance, is another seeming inconsistency.

It is one thing to see a storm looming and lowering in the distance, and another to be caught in the vortex of the whirlwind, and this was as true in Christ's case as it is in ours.

"Why," asks the sciolist, "should the Crucified seek to evade suffering or death, if the agony through which He was passing constituted the essential climax of His earthly mission"? Why, "for the joy set before Him," did He not indeed, and without complaint, "endure the Cross, despising the shame"?[1] Could He not have anticipated His own

[1] Heb. 12^2.

apostle, who, with the prospect of martyrdom before Him, calmly testified, "For me to die is gain"? and as the same apostle did on another occasion, could He not have exclaimed, exultingly, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

By the perplexities which such questions create for us, we can in some degree understand how much more painful Christ's situation must have been for Him. His anguish-stricken cry was essentially a longing for light, which, once given, would have at least made an intolerable experience somewhat less intolerable. A problem which, at the moment was even to Him insoluble, how can any one else without presumption now expect to solve? Perhaps we might rather take the risk to say, had Christ seen all that has come to pass since He uttered that woeful cry, He might never have uttered it; but a risk there would be. Pain, at its worst, is a fell adversary, not to be reasoned with. All the logic of the world is powerless against it, as everyone knows who has felt how utterly merciless it can be; and has been therefore forced, in spite of himself, to exclaim, not once merely, but again and again, Why? O why? but still has received no answer.

It may, in some degree, help us to understand Christ's inquiry if we consider what light, if any, is shed upon it by the fact that He was neither the first, nor the last, to utter it. Many besides Him, a countless multitude indeed, for one reason

or another, have been forced to appeal to God in the same or similar terms. But never was cry of distress so penetrating, or impenetrable, as that which came from Him who, crowned with thorns, hung upon the cross, but amid all His previous troubles and temptations had lived in the bosom of the Father.

Moreover, it is well to recall the fact that it was the way of the Hebrews, even of their inspired prophets and psalmists, to ascribe to the divine agency events of all kinds, joyous or grievous, personal or national. Of the habit Job furnishes a well-known example: "Jahweh gave, and Jahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jahweh." Not alone by the thoughtless and profane, but also by the thoughtful and devout, was this mode of thought and expression employed. No other explanation of an occurrence was required when this was always at hand: "It is Jahweh's doing."

For that reason the query, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" was likely to emerge much more frequently among the Hebrews than among ourselves, or other peoples of the West, who, not content to refer an occurrence simply to the divine will, must needs, for their mental satisfaction, take account, as far as they can, of secondary causes. In a Hebrew psalm, therefore, where, because of the naïveté characteristic of Semitic peoples, the heart expressed itself, both in joy and sorrow, with an unrestrained freedom, the exclamation, "Why hast Thou forsaken

me ? " implies neither such a deliberate, nor such an irreverent, indictment of the Almighty as it would, coming from one of another and less passionate race, disciplined to some extent by science on the one hand, and by the Christian faith on the other. The British people, I would say, are much more careful not to ascribe evil to God in any form than was the prophet Amos, when, as if it admitted of none but a negative answer, he asked, " Shall there be evil in a city, and Jahweh hath not done it ? "

In its original setting the wail does not require nor even tolerate the interpretation given it by the " orthodox " when it was applied to Christ ; for the speaker here is not the Son of God, but some pious Israelite, speaking, however, not for himself alone, but also for his fellow-countrymen, harassed, like himself, beyond measure, by persecution. What their sufferings were he does not care to specify ; and never does he refer to them but in figurative terms, all indicative of a bestial ferocity on the part of those who inflicted them. Therefore, when Christ takes up the complaint, it does not necessarily imply anything like that dereliction by the Father which is said to have constituted the true tragedy of the Cross.

For their cruelties the psalmist has a long tirade to make against his enemies ; but of any particular evil God had done him he has nothing to say except, by implication, that He had forsaken him. Even

of that, however, he is not quite certain, for he does not know why God should have done so. Therefore, if he had so many various charges to bring against his human enemies, and none at all of a definite character against his God, may we not infer that, against the latter, he had no complaint to make, except, perhaps, that He had suffered them to gore him like bulls, and to tear his flesh like savage dogs, or ravening lions ?

In view of the way in which he elaborates his complaint, beginning with the question, " My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? " but filling it up, as he proceeds, entirely with references to what he had suffered at the hands of bestial men, might not the question addressed to God be resolved into this : " Why hast Thou not my right sustained, when cruel men against me furiously rose up in wrath to make of me their prey ? "

But even that question might be resolved into another more comprehensive : " Why hast Thou allowed so much and such grievous wrong, to be done by man to man, from age to age, all the world over, and suffered nations also to make war on each other, as they have done, and are doing still, with consequent bloodshed, rapine and all other crimes imaginable ? Why hast Thou allowed all these things to the extent at least of not preventing them ? "

But the question may be resolved into another

yet more fundamental: "Why didst Thou suffer sin to enter the world at all, and to propagate itself until it, instead of righteousness, has covered the earth, as the waters cover the sea?" But to prevent sin would deprive man also of the freedom required to do the right, and so strip him of his dignity and responsibility, and make him no man at all.

Christ, therefore, when He asks, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" may be understood as complaining, not of any torment God had directly inflicted upon Him, but of the manifold wrongs He had suffered, and was suffering still, at the hands of lawless and heartless men, especially in connection with His wholly unmerited betrayal, condemnation and crucifixion.

The question Why? prefaced as it is, not merely by a single but a twofold, acknowledgment of God as *his God*, really implies, on the writer's part, an intense and inextinguishable devotion; it also presupposes, not the severance, but the continuance, of the intimate and friendly relation which had hitherto existed between Jahweh and him, and even a determination to hold on to God, as Jacob clung to the mysterious antagonist whom he wrestled with in the night-season, and refused to let go, until he had received a blessing from him.

In Psalm 22, verses 2 and 10, the psalmist repeats the appellation, "My God," which might

have come, with equal propriety, from an Israelite, or from the people Israel. For Jahweh was deemed Israel's God emphatically, and it was only as such that an Israelite could claim Him as *his* God. Despite his afflictions, therefore, the writer was not yet personally alienated from his God, nor could he understand how or why Jahweh should be alienated from him. Under all his grievances he is sustained by the thought that Jahweh is still his God, as He had ever been. What pains and perplexes him is the fact that, calling on Him continually, night and day, and still in his weakness confessing Him to be "his strength" (ver. 19), he has as yet no answer, i.e., no relief.

Before he was born, Jahweh, unknown to him, had been *his* God, or he would neither have been born, nor, if born, could he have outlived the moment of his birth; but now, when in great peril, being compassed about by a horde of lawless men, he is tempted to inquire, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" It is as if he had said: "That Thou shouldst forsake me at the very moment when I need Thee most—that were a strange thing indeed, quite unlike all Thy dealings with me hitherto. Can it be that my faith, the faith of a mortal man, has exceeded Thy fidelity? Nay; such a thing were incredible and impossible. God is a name the import of which may vary with the man who uses it; but, as for me, 'Thou art *my*

God, and, for that reason, Thou shalt never leave me, nor forsake me.' "

One thing is certain: the writer was no miscreant who had forsaken God, and was now in turn forsaken. His complaint was a sure sign of his continued and even passsionate interest in God—a virtual prayer indeed, inspired by a holy affection, an invincible faith, and a humble importunity; a confession of ignorance and embarrassment certainly, but betraying neither presumption nor despair. Of the hope symbolised by the bush which burned, and yet was not consumed, but bequeathed from generation to generation through the whole course of Israel's chequered history, there is still a flicker in verse 22, the first line being a cry for deliverance—"Save me from the lion's mouth"—followed immediately by the exultant confession, "From the horns of the wild oxen thou hast delivered me."

How are we to understand such a sudden change in the situation? Let us suppose thst the writer was in close touch with the Jewish exiles, sharing the wrongs showered on them by their proud enemies—the Babylonians—and stung by the taunts directed, not against them alone, but against their God also, whom, as they supposed, they had vanquished together with His people; suppose also that, from time to time, he heard reports of the rising power of Cyrus, of the victories he was achieving one after another, and of his steady advance

—all portending that nothing short of Babylon would be his ultimate destination, and thereby exciting alarm, on the one hand, among the inhabitants of that great city, "the lady of kingdoms," and awakening, on the other, ardent hopes of deliverance in the hearts of the Jews, and of other captive nations. And when at last Cyrus, with his mighty army, did enter the city in triumph, and, having established himself on the throne, issued his memorable decree, restoring to the Jews their lost liberty, granting them also leave to return to their homes, and to rebuild their ruined temple, was not that a glorious deliverance which, according to the unknown prophet of the exile, he owed, not to Cyrus alone, or chiefly, but to Jahweh, whose commissioner Cyrus was—a deliverance so sudden, so unexpected, so thrilling, that it might be fitly compared either to the snatching of his prey "from the lion's mouth" (v. 21) or to a rescue "from the horns of the wild oxen"? (v. 22).

(3) As in Psalm 22[22] there is an utter contrast in tone and outlook between the one line and the other, so between verses 2-22, which are full of declamation, and the following verses 23-32, which substitute an optimistic for a pessimistic outlook, the writer not only praises God, instead of arraigning Him; but, as if to make amends for his unwarranted complaint, takes upon himself the vow of an ardent devotee:

"I will declare Thy name unto my brethren,
In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee."

Under a three-fold designation—"those who fear Jahweh," "all the seed of Jacob," "all the seed of Israel"—he summons his countrymen "to praise Him," "to glorify Him," and "to stand in awe of Him," as having a good reason for so doing, for "*Jahweh had not really despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted*," nor "*hid His face from him*," as they had supposed.

Soaring like the eagle, he now declares that "all the ends of the earth," and not the seed of Jacob alone, "shall remember and turn unto Jahweh"; that "a seed shall serve Him"; and that, by a coming generation, His righteousness, long obscured by the grievous misfortunes of His people, shall be made manifest to all by Israel's restoration.

There are two points in regard to the Psalm that the late Professor Cheyne of Oxford seeks to establish: "It is the utterance," he said, "not of an individual, but most probably (under the form of a dramatic dialogue) of the ideal Israel, called by a kindred writer, 'the covenant of the people' (Isaiah 49^8), and 'the light of the nations' (Isaiah 42^7), who shall rise out of the provisional Church-nation, and, identifying himself with it, lead it on to a spiritual victory." "The speaker," he adds, "is an *individual, who might also be surnamed Israel*, for he is *the flower of Israel*."[1]

[1] *The Book of Psalms*, p. 59.

Following, consciously or unconsciously, in the wake of the English scholar, Dr. Felix Coblenz, author of *Das Betende Ich*, a small volume crowned by the Theological Faculty of Berlin, and published in 1897, certifies that the Jewish scholars, *Raschi and Kimchi*; that the Germans, *Rosenmüller*, *Reuss*, *Smend*, *Baethgen and Kautzsch*; and that one better known to us than any of these, the Scotsman, *William Robertson Smith*, had all agreed in referring the Psalm, not to a mere individual, and therefore not to Christ, but to an author personating Israel in its vicissitudes of depression and exaltation. Such also was the opinion of Coblenz: "It is utterly impossible," said he, "that the rescue of a single individual should produce such a lasting and even revolutionary effect on the condition of all peoples"; and I agree with him. The circumstances of the poet, so graphically described, are indeed much more in keeping with that hypothesis than with the supposition that he is simply sketching his own tribulation.

Another point which Professor Cheyne sought to make good is that nothing but excruciating pain could have wrung from Christ the wail: "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" After remarking that, of the four evangelists, it is reported by Matthew and Mark alone, "No one," he says, "can deny that such an important statement required to be substantiated by the others to have the highest claims on our

acceptance." So he does not altogether discredit the joint statement of Matthew and Mark, though uncorroborated by the other evangelists. Authority it may have, though not " the highest " ; and in this case the demand for the conjoint testimony of the four is, in his opinion, fully justified because the complaint reported by the two is, or seems to be, at variance with the Son's absolute faith in the Father, which, according to the testimony of all the four, had been maintained without interruption through His whole life. If there was one thing more than another that distinguished Jesus it was His faith ; and, if anything in His disciples that He rebuked more frequently or severely than another, it was " want of faith," or " little faith."

" How is it possible," asks the Oxford scholar, " in view of all that we know of His habitual character, that the words in question can be the deliberately chosen expression of the consciousness of Jesus ? " Even if they were uttered by Him, the phrasing was minted, not by Him, but by someone unknown to us, whose experience, together with theirs for whom he spoke, must have been similar to His, though not identical. If ever there was one to whose prevailing spirit the complaint was utterly alien, it was Christ ; therefore we are justified in assuming that the words were not really His, in the sense of having been deliberately chosen by Him, but only in the sense that they had been in

His mind before, but were now wrung from Him by an inward necessity.

Is it not legitimate, then, to appeal from Christ hanging on the tree, and, if we might reverently say so, no longer master of Himself, to Christ in His normal condition of soul and body? Responsible He could not be for a merely casual and spasmodic ejaculation which belied His habitual faith, being as involuntary and evanescent as the pang that forced it from Him. "The divine Spirit, author of all noble impulses, judges men by the habitual bent of their will, not by the verbal escapes of their dark, doubting moments"[1]. And should not Jesus, who shared our humanity, be judged in the same way?

Luther and Calvin, on the other hand, held that Jesus was not simply betrayed, by His agony, into the use of an unguarded expression; in their opinion His complaint was fully justified, forasmuch as God had really, and with the full deliberation of a judicial act, wounded Him unto death, and forsaken Him indeed. Shall we exonerate Christ, then, from the responsibility of what seems a lapse from His habitual faith; and transfer to the Father the responsibility for His intolerable distress, and the cry consequent upon it?

It does indeed greatly amaze us that, despite all his geniality, and even joviality, Luther should have allowed himself to set down, in a permanent

[1] Professor A. B. Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 349.

form, a sentence such as this, which has no foundation whatever in Scripture: "in His innocent, tender nature, Jesus had to feel God's wrath and judgment against sin; to taste for us eternal death and damnation; and, in a word, to suffer *everything* which a condemned sinner has merited, and must suffer eternally"! Surely in this we have a remnant of unreformed Mediaevalism.

Calvin is not less open to criticism for holding that, when Jesus had endured all the agony of the Cross, and even exclaimed, "It is finished," there was still more and still worse in store for Him, inasmuch as He had yet to descend into Hades, there to undergo, until He rose again from the dead, all the torments of the damned!

That remarkable dogma was not too *outré* for our countryman, Boston of Ettrick, who assimilated other "orthodox" doctrines, which to the sane and sober-minded are scarcely less provocative of dissent and even resentment. As he followed in the footsteps of the foremost continental reformers, so, with a wondrous docility, his countrymen, not the peasantry merely but the clergy also, followed him. Even the author of *The True and Scriptural Doctrine of Redemption* maintained that, for the elect, Christ bore a punishment not merely equivalent to what was due to them, but identical with it! which is an utterly impossible supposition, for to any two persons, whoever they be, and however they agree

or differ, the same punishment would not be exactly the same ; and what an immense difference there was in every way between Christ and those for whom He suffered! Think what Moir's contention would signify for the cottagers of Tarbolton, when it was associated with the notion of hell then prevalent among the good folk of Ayrshire, if " Black Russell " was a fair specimen of the popular pulpiteer :—

His talk o' hell, where devils dwell,
Our vera souls does harrow
Wi' fright that day.

. . .

A vast unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Filled fou o' lowan brunstane,
Whase ragin' flame an' scorchin' heat
Wad melt the hardest whunstane.

The question, Did Christ really suffer for the elect the very penalty due to them ? would now be dismissed by every person whose opinion is worth anything, as quite unnecessary, or even profane.

To answer it decisively, and in the negative, it is enough to consider how, under God, we know that sinners do suffer for their sins. So far as one can see, any painful experience befalling a sinner as a *proper* consequence of his sin, is never of a capricious character, for God can never be arbitrary in anything He does ; on the contrary every one of His attributes forbids that He should be so. In the Old Testament, it is true, both in the historical and the prophetic books, that dispensations such as drought,

locusts, famine, pestilence, foreign invasion, defeat in war, deportation, calamities indeed of every kind, are viewed as divine punishments inflicted on the people for their sins. But, in all or most of such cases, between the alleged penalty and its alleged provocation there is no causal connection traceable. And, as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, or even later, the Scottish people, with the sanction of their "divines," continued to account for every disaster just as the Jews had done two thousand years before, paying no heed to Christ's questions: "Suppose ye that the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, were sinners above all others, because they suffered such things? Or that those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, were sinners above all others that dwelt in Jerusalem"? This they did even when they could not specify with any certainty wherein the guilt lay, nor show any connection between the sin and the calamity it was supposed to have induced. Indeed, it was reckoned an eminent part of the piety of our ancestors to associate with the punitive will of God all calamitous occurrences, especially the more calamitous, and to overlook the obvious physical, or moral, causes sufficient to account for them. No mishap, however, can evoke a genuine repentance on the part of the sufferer, whether an individual or a community, if the sin supposed to account for it is purely hypothetical. The moral effect is quite

different when some evil overtakes us, and a real causal connection can be traced between it and some definite transgression of which we, as individuals, or a nation, are consciously guilty.

So far from being of an arbitrary character, the evil which of necessity follows an act of sin, though commonly called punishment, is simply its natural reaction on the sinner ; nor from him can it be transferred to anyone else. And when a sin has once been committed, the conscience which condemned and forbade it, while its execution was simply contemplated, does not cease to be still related to it, or even to pass judgment upon it from time to time ; on the contrary, it still continues to take a painful, though it may be an involuntary, interest in it, as an act from which the doer cannot, by any possibility, dissociate himself.

The severest reaction of sin on the sinner passes beyond the mere regret which follows a minor, or an inadvertent offence, into remorse, a more poignant experience, which not only " bites back," but bites again and again, preying like a vulture on the soul, and thereby making life a constant misery. Of its terrible power Judas Iscariot has been for two thousand years, and to the end of time he will continue to be, a notable warning to all the world. Under his incomparable Master he enjoyed quite exceptional privileges, from which, however, he derived no abiding advantage ; at last driven to

desperation by his own apostasy, he broke through all restraints, and plunged headlong into the abyss. In his case the reaction of his fell crime was immediate, and also proportionate to its infamy. In Hades, too, as soon as he crossed its threshold, doubtless he discovered that even by suicide he had not escaped the curse he had brought upon himself; for in his own soul he carried it. But one can well believe that some of "the spirits in prison," though far from being either saints or heroes, would even presume to hiss the traitor when he made his first appearance among them.

These reactions, lesser and greater, by pricking, piercing, or probing the guilty conscience, are doubtless calculated to check the sinner in his downward career, and so, though painful, serve a good end. From his first bitter experience of sin the prudent man would take warning, and be careful not to continue the perilous course on which he had entered. But too often one sin simply paves the way for another, and a lesser for a greater, until a habit is formed, which becomes tyrannous, and increasingly tyrannous, until self-restraint and self-control are next to impossible. Of such cases there are awful examples in every community great or small.

Instead, therefore, of regarding the moral vitiation which is the inevitable result of habitual levity, laxity, or self-indulgence, as a punishment inflicted by a special Providence and designed to lead

the sinner to repentance (a result which it too often prevents instead of promoting) we have to regard it simply as a natural and necessary sequel to his own unwholesome volitions, tending to defile and demoralise him, which is one of the greatest evils, or even the greatest, that could befall a man; in other words, we regard it as simply an exemplification of the Pauline maxim: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, while he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting"[1]—a law which in morals holds good with as much certainty as in agriculture.

In two ways, therefore, neither of which is a slight evil, the sinner suffers for, and by, his sin; in neither way, however, by an arbitrary infliction, but in both by a perfectly natural sequence, to which, though it be natural, we cannot altogether deny a divine character. First, by the sting of an as yet unsophisticated conscience; secondly, by a gradual corruption, which leaves the sinner free, with an ever-increasing facility, to pursue his downward course; or which rather, by an ever increasing encroachment on his liberty, drives him headlong to destruction with an ever-increasing velocity.

But when his own conscience, dethroned, has ceased to bite, or even to bark, the sinner has still to reckon with other consciences, more alive and alert

[1] Gal. 6^{7-8}.

than his own, and operating all around him; also with the collective conscience both of the local community and of the State.

Some restraining influence on the evil doer Public Opinion always has, unless he has become an utter reprobate. The thought of what people will think of him, say to him, and of him, do to him, and be to him, and of the social advantages which he will certainly forfeit if he defy the canons of social propriety, acts upon him more or less effectually as a deterrent. Indeed it is the only god for whom a large, but hardly respectable, section of the community has any regard.

In none of these ways could Christ, by any possibility, suffer, for the obvious reason that He was no sinner. Where no sin is, there can be none of its natural and inevitable consequences. And if God never inflicts an arbitrary punishment on the sinner, still less would He inflict such a punishment on one who was no sinner, but the Saviour of sinners. Christ, then, could not suffer the penalty due to the sins of others as they naturally suffer for their own. It is equally certain, however, that if He did not, and could not, suffer as sinners must in the natural course of things, He suffered as they do not, and never can.

It is now apposite to inquire how Christ's sorrows and sufferings were brought about. So far as we, at this distance of time, are able to judge, there was in them, as there is in the essential retribution

of sinners, nothing of an arbitrary character; they were due simply to the natural reaction against Him of the forces of evil, against which, from first to last, He waged an uncompromising warfare. The sin He witnessed in all classes, and especially among the leaders of society, both in the civil sphere and the religious, was to Him a source of unceasing trouble and anxiety; so also was the manifold misery resulting from it, not to the guilty alone, but to others also. Frequent allusion he also made to Gehenna, showing that His contemplation of existing evil was not confined to the sin and misery of this visible and transient world. Though Himself without sin, and without any complicity in the sin of others, He felt it all, and deplored it all, as no sinner did, or could do. In proportion to His unfathomable pity and spotless purity, the sins and sorrows of humanity preyed continually upon His spirit. Knowing what was in man, He saw sin where others failed to see it; and in consequence He suffered much that did not affect them at all.

The strange unconcern of the multitudes who had no regard for their own highest interests, and did not reciprocate the love of the Good Shepherd, or second His efforts on their behalf; in other words, the general fact that "He came to His own, and His own received Him not," was to Him a deep and double regret: sorry for His own sake, He was also, and still more, sorry for theirs. Witness the

lamentation: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not"![1]

At Nazareth, where He spent by far the greater part of His life, and even in His own home there, He had a somewhat dubious reception. His mother even, who should have known Him best, did not at times know what to think, or what to make, of Him. To her and to His brothers also He remained an enigma to the last. Once, when He had gathered around Him a band of attentive hearers, His mother and other members of the family, judging, by a report they had received, that He, carried away by a fit of fanaticism, was exerting Himself beyond measure, set out together to expostulate with Him, and to protect Him from Himself; for, in their opinion, He was behaving like a man "beside himself."[2]

Immediately after this story, St. Mark tells another somewhat like it. A party of scribes, hearing of His doings, came all the way from Jerusalem to see Him for themselves, and to take note of His procedure; and, having done so, they summed up their observations in the damaging conclusion: "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils"[3]—a judgment inspired by sheer

[1] Matt. 23^{37}. [2] Mark 3^{21}. [3] Mark 3^{22}.

malice, and, as the Maligned pointed out, self-contradictory; for "how can Satan cast out Satan"? Such was the treatment that Christ received from His kith and kin, and from the exponents of the Old Testament Scriptures—two parties from both of which He was entitled to expect a more intelligent, and more sympathetic, reception.

The populous and busy, but greatly favoured, cities on the Sea of Galilee—Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum—"where most of His mighty works were done," Jesus upbraided, as He had good reason to do, for their imperviousness to His appeals, which, He said, would have moved to repentance even cities of such evil fame as Tyre and Sidon. Judge by what passion He must have been actuated when even Capernaum, "His own city," as it was called by Matthew (c. 9[1]), the home, moreover, of His chief disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, He could address in such scathing terms as these: "Shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? Nay, even to Hades thou shalt descend."

To return to Nazareth. How was He received by His fellow-townsmen? There, from a child, He had lived for thirty years. During all that time He could not have remained in utter obscurity. From His boyhood onwards He must have given many unmistakable tokens of His exceptional powers and graces, and these should have made Him known,

[1] Matt. 11^{23}.

and favourably known, both to the older and the younger inhabitants of a small town, not distinguished in any way, if we may judge by the saying, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But He had either remained essentially unknown, or the evidence He had given of Himself was so unique that the stupid people about Him could not appreciate it. There, nevertheless, He chose to inaugurate His public ministry, with a discourse based on Isaiah 61^3—a gracious discourse on a gracious text, and graciously received, for "all spoke well of Him."

On a subsequent occasion He spoke in the same synagogue and to the same congregation, but on a different topic, in another tone, and with a startling vehemence, assailing the ineradicable prejudice of the Jewish people, that they, and they alone, were the elect of the most high God—a philippic by which His hearers were so incensed that, instead of applauding Him as they had done before, they treated Him as a malefactor, and the worst of malefactors, and actually made an attempt to kill Him by hurling Him headlong from the brow of the hill on which the city was built; but somehow He eluded their nefarious designs.[1]

By His twofold experience as a preacher at Nazareth—the favour with which the first of His discourses was received, and the enmity with which the second was rewarded—the hint was plainly

[1] Luke 4^{25-29}.

given Him that, if He made it His object to please the people by prophesying "smooth things," or by pandering to their prejudices, He might easily become as popular as the false prophets who cried "Peace! peace! when there was no peace." But if He would speak to them frankly of their faults, and set before them the truth which they needed most of all to hear for their correction and instruction, they would turn against Him fiercely, as they turned against it, and even kill Him perhaps, though its destruction was beyond their power.

Even at the hands of the twelve Jesus had much to endure when in such words as these He had to rebuke them again and again: "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I still be with you?" (Matt. 17^{17}).

"Have I been so long time with thee, and yet [though I am now on the point of departing] hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father"? (John 14^{9}).

"Did I not choose you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6^{70}).

Sorest of all, perhaps, was the rebuke administered to Peter, the disciple whom He also honoured most: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16^{23}).

Hard for the twelve it may have been to hear such criticism, faithful though the wounds of a friend be, and there never was such a friend as Jesus; but harder for Him to observe and chastise the faults which they daily displayed under His searching gaze—the want of faith, the little faith, the slowness of understanding, the worldly ambitions, the petty rivalries and jealousies, all venial perhaps in their estimation, but grave, every one of them, in His eyes.

How many such rebukes He had to address to the twelve while they were subject to His supervision we cannot say; but we are safe in conjecturing that all are not recorded. Wounded He must have been beyond the power of words to express when Judas betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver; when Peter denied Him thrice immediately after declaring that He would never forsake Him; and when, in the hour of mortal danger, all forsook Him and fled, caring only for their own safety!

Further, the unresponsiveness which He encountered in so many quarters was not content simply to ignore Him by turning a deaf ear to His teaching, or a blind eye to the visible demonstrations of power and grace, and so playing a merely negative rôle. By a natural process, indifference passes into enmity, and secret enmity into open hostility, till at last the saying is fully verified: "He that is not with me is against me." To Jesus, therefore, there fell an exceptional measure of that

peculiar " blessedness " which He declared to be the privilege of those who are so eminently good as to be persecuted, and willing to be so abused for righteousness' sake. As truly as in the world there is everywhere a reaction of good against evil, there is also an universal reaction of evil against good. So many-sided, and so unworldly, was the mission of our Lord, and with such an intensity of devotion did He pursue it, that He could not but offend the many who were of an alien spirit.

All through His public ministry He was engaged in an unceasing controversy with Judaism in its various phases. At every turn He came into conflict with its official representatives, sacred and secular, and with its sects ; at one time with the Pharisees, at another with the Sadducees, sometimes even with John the Baptist and his disciples. Most of the opposition came, however, from the Pharisees. If on the Sabbath He healed one who had been a sufferer for thirty-eight weary years, He was denounced as a Sabbath-breaker, and, as such, no ordinary transgressor ; for a breach of the Sabbath, though of a microscopic character, was one of the greatest sins recognised by the Jews.

If any one of His disciples, walking through a field on the Sabbath, plucked a few ears of corn to appease his hunger, it must have been intense indeed if recourse was had to such a paltry means of pacifying it : but if it was really so, what satisfaction could

be derived from such a source? If in the practice of asceticism, He did not go so far as the Baptist, He was, by the perverse, pronounced "a glutton and a winebibber"!

Thus He who, in the Garden and on the Cross, suffered nothing less than agony, had also, in His daily life, pinpricks innumerable to endure. Doubtless He made friends here and there, and not a few. How could it be otherwise, when He went about doing good, not by His "mighty works" alone, but also by His comforting and inspiring words, spoken in private and public, to the sick, the sad, the bereaved, the penitent, the outcast, to all indeed who were "labouring and heavy laden"? But even by His gracious words and mighty deeds, which should have won Him general gratitude and appreciation, even by these, such is the perversity of men, He made Himself many enemies. Being in every respect unique, so wise, so noble, so spiritual, so large-minded and large-hearted, so pre-eminent indeed in every grace and virtue, and the Jews, on the other hand, so egotistic, so nationalistic, so "cribbed, cabined and confined" by ritual and tradition, it was inevitable that, when He came on the scene as the Founder of the new Dispensation, He should suffer by a fierce reaction of use and wont.

Such, so far as we can discern, are the ways in which Christ chiefly suffered. Torments such as the Father is said to have secretly inflicted upon Him

are to us, of course, indiscernible, as well as inconsistent with the happy and harmonious relations that, according to His own testimony, always existed between Him and the Father. Entirely alone He stood in this respect, that He had no sin of His own to react upon Him; but much He suffered, nevertheless, by the sins of others, and especially by their indocility and narrow-mindedness, the very qualities which, in the sixth century B.C., led the prophet of the Exile to address Israel thus: "Hear ye deaf; and look ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind but my Servant? or deaf as my messenger that I send?" So the very defects which in the days of the Second Isaiah disqualified Israel for being Jahweh's true Servant, still disqualified the Jews in the days of Christ, as they have largely disqualified them unto this day. Even now the sufferings of our Lord are not ended, nor will they ever be till sin is wholly vanquished. And when shall that glorious consummation be? On us it devolves, in the spirit of the Master, to labour on amid all hindrances and discouragements, and so hasten the day when, to His greater, if not entire, satisfaction, He shall see of the travail of His soul.

CHAPTER X

The Servant of Jahweh

To test the applicability of the text, Isaiah 53^{10}, so often quoted to support the contention that the final sufferings of our Lord were directly inflicted upon Him from above, we must examine it in the light of the context, and not of the immediate context merely, but of a much larger, comprising chapters 40-55, the greater part of which is now recognised as the production, not of the Isaiah contemporary with Hezekiah, but of the unknown writer now commonly designated the Second Isaiah.

In this "poem of consolation," addressed to Israel as the Babylonian captivity was drawing to a close, there is inserted a series of songs by another author, also unknown, having for their common theme the vocation, sufferings, and eventual triumph of the *Servant*. Instead of being collected in a separate compartment, they are inserted at intervals in the larger prophecy, their bearing on each other being thereby somewhat obscured. Of these detached songs the best known is c. 52^{13}-53^{12}, and for this reason, that in the New Testament there are numerous quotations from it and allusions to it, which are applied to Christ as having been fulfilled in Him, and as furnishing an Old Testament warrant

for the vicarious character of His sufferings. Where, if not in that famous oracle, are to be found, so closely linked together, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow them," to which St. Peter refers, as testified beforehand by the prophets; or the sufferings to which the seeming stranger, no other, however, than the risen Christ Himself, referred, as, on the day He rose from the dead, He walked unrecognised with the two friends on their way to Emmaus? If the allusions to this portion of the Old Testament were eliminated from the New, the latter would be of a very different character: it would even be as if its very heart had been abstracted. It is, therefore, of great importance to explore its history and significance—a task which demands a close examination of its original setting and original application.

A study now long-continued, which began on the Continent in the eighteenth century with the birth of Biblical criticism, has at last convinced Old Testament students of this and other lands, both in the eastern and western hemisphere, that the references to the "Servant," which from apostolic times were supposed to have been pointing forward to Jesus and His redeeming work for centuries before He came, primarily referred to the people Israel, who, by that time, had a long and chequered history behind them, though its divine consummation was still unfulfilled, and by the masses, nor by them alone, quite unrecognised.

The Servant of Jahweh

The "Servant" first appears under that title in Isaiah 41^{8ff}, where, in terms highly honorific, and affectionate as well, he is addressed by Jahweh as "Israel, my Servant," "Jacob, whom I have chosen," "the offspring of Abraham, my friend"; and, in keeping with these high-sounding appellations, the message addressed to him is one of mingled endearment and encouragement :—

> "Thou art my Servant,
> I have chosen thee,
> And not cast thee away.
> Fear thou not,
> For I am with thee;
> Be not dismayed,
> For I am thy God.
> Yea, I will strengthen thee,
> Yea, I will uphold thee."

It is thus plain that the "Servant" is no other than Israel, then "dreeing his weird" in Babylon; but the hour of his deliverance was then at hand; and when, according to promise, he had returned to Zion, and entered on a new stage of his career, the most illustrious of all (though not in a political sense), Jahweh, who had befriended him even from patriarchal times, would still be with him, to fit him for his high and honourable mission of diffusing among the nations the knowledge of Jahweh, his God, not however, as his alone, but as the God and Saviour of all peoples. Besides Isaiah $41^{8, 9}$, there are many passages in the *Second Isaiah* that no less unambiguously affirm the identity of Israel with

Jahweh's Servant; so many indeed, and so clear in their testimony, that one may well wonder how, for so long, the identity was unrecognised (42^{1-19}, 43^{10}, $44^{1, 2, 21, 26}$; 45^{4}, 48^{20}, $49^{3, 5, 6}$, 52^{13-15}, 53^{1-12}). From these texts it appears that the designation of Israel as the "Servant of Jahweh" occurs not only in the four "Servant" Songs (42^{1-4}, 49^{1-6}, 50^{4-9}, and 52^{13}-53^{12}), but also in the prophecies ascribed to the *Second Isaiah*, which form the main body of chapters 40-55. Nor is Isaiah the Second the only one who applies to Israel the title "Servant of Jahweh"; in Jeremiah 46^{27-28} an encouragement and a promise are given to Israel similar to those given in Isaiah 41^{10}:

> "Fear not thou, *O my Servant Jacob*,
> And be not dismayed, *O Israel;*
> For, behold, I will save thee from afar off,
> And thy seed from the land of their captivity.
>
> Fear thou not, *O Jacob, my servant*,
> For I am with thee, saith Jahweh,
> For I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee;
> But I will not make a full end of thee."

Hitzig, however, suggests that these verses are spurious, and have displaced the genuine text. But, in any case, they show that the author, whoever he was, identified the "Servant" of Jahweh with Israel.

That honourable title, "my Servant" should have taught Israel a much-needed and never-to-be-forgotten lesson, viz., that he was not to be treated by his God as a petted and pampered favourite

among the nations, but as a people chosen, indeed, to certain high privileges; not for his own benefit alone, however, but to qualify him for a service corresponding to his peculiar gifts, viz., the propagation among the nations of the knowledge of Jahweh and His Torah. But notwithstanding the unprecedented clearness and emphasis with which his world-mission was proclaimed by the Second Isaiah, Israel never really grasped it, and has never yet got quite beyond the idea that Jahweh is his God in a special or even exclusive sense. "Of those to whom much is given, much is required"; but that far-reaching principle of equity, enunciated by Christ, Israel has to this day failed to comprehend. Instead of freely communicating to the Gentiles the Word with which he had been entrusted, he held it as a private possession; and by so doing he greatly narrowed its significance for himself.

Is the Servant of Jahweh a people or a person?

Notwithstanding the evidence which we have adduced in proof of the Servant's identity with Israel, he has been for ages recognised by Christians, not as a people but as an individual. For example, the Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer to Queen Candace, as he rode through the desert, reading aloud in the 53rd of Isaiah, could not understand who the martyr was that is there portrayed; but, assuming, as he naturally might, that the reference was to a person, he inquired of Philip, the evangelist,

who had mounted his chariot, and taken a seat beside him, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" Favouring his assumption, Philip identified the meek and patient sufferer (Isaiah 53^7) with Jesus, who shortly before had been "led as a lamb to the slaughter." But a correspondence such as that does not suffice to establish the identity of the two characters. If a single point of agreement could establish it, a single point of disagreement could just as easily disestablish it. If Christ really was "the Servant of Jahweh," what warrant is there for holding that His "visage"—the visage of the one person to whom, since the first century, the prophecy has been generally supposed to refer—was "marred more than any man, and His form than the sons of men"?[1] In the Gospels there is no hint of any such glaring disfigurement. In spite of Isaiah 52^{14}, and of 53^2 which declares that the Servant "had no form nor comeliness," Jesus is, in the early art of the catacombs, depicted as a comely youth. It was only with the decline of art, from the fifth century onwards—that an attempt was made, in the interest of dogma, and at the expense of artistic feeling, to represent the Son of man as "a man of sorrows." But certainly it was not from a grim, austere, haggard and age-worn face that there beamed the "glory full of grace and truth," which St. John and his fellow-disciples beheld in their Lord. The

[1] Isaiah 52^{14}.

representation that the Servant's image was at last so marred as to be no longer recognisable, even as a man's, implies that at first it had been unmistakably human, and that he is presented to us, not as a people, but an individual. And as the oracle, beginning with Isaiah 52^{13-15}, is continued through chapter 53, notwithstanding the unfortunate division between the two chapters, which form a real unity, the latter and larger part must be taken as still referring to the one—whoever he was, with the "marred visage."

In 53^{6} he is called "*a man* of sorrows," a description which, like 52^{14} *seems*, but only *seems*, to shatter the hypothesis that *Israel* is the "Servant" of 52^{13}, and to favour the interpretation that he is not a people, but a person. Moreover, in the following verses, though his afflictions are variously presented, yet, taken literally, they are all such as only an individual could properly undergo, whether pains or sicknesses, or wounds, or bruises, or chastisement, or imprisonment, or legal oppression, or execution, or burial. At first these sufferings seem too numerous and varied to admit of being combined in the experience of a single human being; but their number and diversity are greatly reduced when account is taken of the fact that the parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry plays a great part in the language of the prophecy under consideration.

Verse 3, e.g., opens with two lines practically

synonymous, each consisting of two synonymous clauses :

> "He is despised, and rejected of men ;
> A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

The next two are also synonymous with each other :

> "We hid, as it were, our faces from him,
> He was despised, and we esteemed him not."

and the second of these, though not the first, also divides into two parallel clauses.

In v. 4, the parallelism is less regular, both in the Authorised and the Revised Version, but an attempt has been made by Cheyne to repair it, by dividing the verse thus :

> But our sicknesses alone[1] he bore,
> And our pains—he carried them,
> Whilst we esteemed him stricken,[2]
> Smitten of God, and afflicted.

In v. 5 there is a double parallelism : a parallelism between the first line and the second, and between the third and the fourth, and also between the first pair of lines and the second pair ; so that the four lines contain practically but one proposition, slightly varied from line to line :

> He was wounded for our transgressions,
> He was bruised for our iniquities ;
> The chastisement of our peace was upon him,
> And with his stripes we are healed.

In verses 6, 7, 8, 9 the parallelism is not so well

[1] answering to הוּא (emphatic) : HE ; Vulgate *ipse*.
[2] *Vulgate*—quasi leprosum.

sustained as in the preceding verses, nor do the clauses always refer, as they do in verses 3, 4 and 5, to the Servant's sufferings, and to them exclusively.

But in v. 10 his afflictions are again stated in a pair of parallel lines, and in both traced to the action of Jahweh :

> " It pleased Jahweh to bruise him,
> He hath put him to grief."

What essential difference is there, however, either in a moral or a physical sense, between the " wounding " and the " bruising " of verse 5 ? or between the " bruising " and the " putting to grief " of verse 10 ? What difference or differences are there in the three epithets, " stricken," " smitten " and " afflicted " in verse 4 ? Does each of these participles refer to a separate experience or group of experiences ? or do they all apply to one experience ?

Taking all the verses into account, we obtain no definite information regarding the sufferings, to which there are so many allusions. Of tautological repetition we have enough, or more than enough ; but of plain fact there is a remarkable dearth. In verses 7, 8, 9, however, a train of facts seems to stand out clear, viz., that he was judicially, but unjustly, tried, condemned, put to death, and buried. But where, in all history, is there a personage corresponding to the hero, with his medley of characteristics ? Jesus, as all the world knows, was unjustly condemned and crucified ; but the story

of His life tells of no literal sickness that He personally endured. Matthew, on the other hand, informs us that He delivered "many that were possessed with devils," and healed all the sick that were brought to Him, and *so* "fulfilled what was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."[1] One who triumphed over devils and vanquished diseases of all sorts, as Jesus did, is an altogether different person, if a person at all, from the victim described in Isaiah 52-53, who was a notorious sufferer, subject, as the writer would lead us to think, to all the sicknesses and diseases to which flesh is heir.

(3) The question now occurs, how does the fact established by so many references, that the "Servant" was not an individual, but a people, harmonise with the fact, equally certain, that the subject of 52^{13}-53^{12} is depicted, not as a people, but as a person? How, but by the supposition that the hero is no *person* after all, but a people *personified*; who, once personified, has to be spoken of continuously thereafter as though it were a person that had suffered much, and in many ways, but in the end, despite its sufferings, and even by means of them, fulfilled the "pleasure of Jahweh"? (Isaiah 53^{10}).

The very fact that Israel is spoken of as a *Servant*—a collective *unit*, led almost inevitably to his personification. To pluralise him was hardly

[1] Matt. 8^{16-17}.

possible if the "Servant" was not a plural, but a singular noun. And, though a whole nation does not in a literal sense suffer sicknesses, pains, wounds, bruises, and cannot be confined within the walls of a prison, nor condemned to death, nor executed, and buried in a single grave, it may yet, by a figure of speech, be said to suffer these wrongs and indignities, if it suffer in ways analogous. "In the Psalms," says Cheyne, "the community, suffering under a sense of God's displeasure, is described as a sick man," in support of which remark he refers to Psalm 6^{1-3}, 38^{3-7}.

Dead a people may with propriety be said to be, when it has lost both its independence and its homeland, as the northern kingdom of Israel had been despoiled, and later the southern also. On the other hand, by a favourable turn of events, moral or political, a nation that has so suffered may be restored to life, as was Israel by the fulfilment of the brilliant promise given it, even in exile; and as happened recently in more cases than one on the Continent of Europe as a result of the Great War. Poland, e.g., long dismembered, is now rejoicing in its territory restored, and the reunion under one Government of its sundered population. Israel, which for many years had lain prostrate in the dust, Ezekiel pictured as a valley of dry bones, bleaching in the sun; and its resurrection, which he, nevertheless, dared to predict, he compared to a movement among the same dry bones, whereby each was

duly fitted to its fellows, so as with them to form a proper skeleton; then, by a still greater miracle, each skeleton was furnished with skin, flesh, sinews, and all things necessary to make a body of it; and the four winds of heaven, breathing upon it, did what was yet required to make it live! (Ezekiel 37^{1-14}). But that was poetry, not prose; fiction, not fact; a vision fulfilled, not literally, but metaphorically: for of Israel, a considerable, and probably the better, part did return from Babylon; settled down once more in its own land; rebuilt its ruined temple; reorganised its worship; and though it never attained to the full glory predicted for it, it had yet a wonderful rally, which attracted the attention of the Eastern world; and stirred, not in its own heart alone, but among neighbouring peoples also, a vivid sense of Jahweh's pre-eminent power and grace.

"When Jahweh turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like men that dreamed. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, Jahweh hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." (Psalm 126^{1-2}.)

In Isaiah 53 the Servant's sufferings are ascribed sometimes to a human, sometimes to the divine, agency: to the former undoubtedly in verses 3, 7, 8, 9; but, as undoubtedly, to the latter in a clause of verse 6: "Jahweh laid on him the iniquity of us all." Again, in verse 10 we are told that "it pleased *Jahweh* to bruise him, and put him to

grief"; but all that is there ascribed to Him is of a general character expressed by two Hebrew verbs, and neither of the acts which they express is distinctly divine, it being quite within the power of man to do either or both. Why, then, should the writer, in accounting for the sufferings, have recourse to a dual authorship, when a single would suffice? Why not refer all to man, or all to God?

As we have already, and more than once, had occasion to remark, it is not uncommon for Biblical writers to refer even actions of a pernicious character and of an undoubtedly human origin, to the divine causality. May it not be, then, that in Isaiah 53^{10}, to which the "orthodox" confidently appealed as a proof, the sufferings of our Lord (*to which there is really no reference in the verse*) were directly inflicted, not by God, but man?

Who smashed the kingdom of the ten tribes, and carried them into captivity? "Assyria," says history, "under the leadership of her kings, Shalmanezer and Sargon." "Nay, not Assyria, but Jahweh," say the prophets, Amos and Isaiah; both of whom announced the coming of the Assyrians as a judgment on Israel, and on other nations also, for their sins, and especially for their injustice and inhumanity. In Isaiah's estimation, the Assyrian was simply as an axe in the hand of Jahweh, to hew down the pomp and power of the northern kingdom,[1] as the woodman fells the trees of the forest.

[1] Isaiah $10^{5, 15}$.

And who destroyed the kingdom of Judah? Who laid Jerusalem in ruins? Who burned down the temple erected by Solomon in the height of his glory, and of Israel's too? Who dethroned the house of David, and rooted up a large, and the better, part of the people from the land which Jahweh had given to their fathers, and which, for that reason, was doubly dear to them? "Nebuchadnezzar and his myrmidons," says history. "Nay, not Babylon, but Jahweh," answer Jeremiah and the unknown prophet of the exile, the latter ascribing to Him not merely Jerusalem's overthrow and the deportation of her inhabitants, but even the unauthorised severity with which the exiles were treated by the victors (Isaiah 40^2). Thus, within the compass of two verses the prophet represents Jahweh as rigorous to the point of injustice, and yet tenderly sympathetic, as at once the author and the avenger of Israel's wrongs.

And who were accountable for the death of Christ, a more tragic event than the overthrow of either of the two kingdoms of Israel, yea, the most tragic in history? "Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel," reply the apostles Peter and John, in the hearing of the leading men in Jerusalem; and yet they were bold enough, and seemingly inconsistent enough, to declare that all who had taken any part in the condemnation or crucifixion of Christ had only done "what the hand and counsel of God determined

beforehand to be done" (Acts 4^{27-28}). Here again there are two agencies at work, the human and the divine; the former so conspicuous as to seem of itself a sufficient explanation of the supreme tragedy; the latter not so conspicuous, and to appearance incompatible with the first.

Since the archives of Heaven are inaccessible to human research, how, we ask, did the apostles, Peter and John, get to know that in them God had prescribed every particular of the sufferings which, but not till ages afterwards, Christ was destined to endure? May it not be, is it not probable indeed, or even certain, that they read the sufferings of the Servant, which are historically described in the 52nd and 53rd of Isaiah, not as historical, but as divine, predictions, or predeterminations, fulfilled in Christ, although these descriptions, when written, did not refer to Him at all, but to Israel? The contrary supposition, that they did originally refer to Him by anticipation, is quite in accordance with quotations from the same source by St. Peter, for example, in his first epistle (2^{21-25}) and other New Testament writers. But if the identification of the "Servant" with Israel be sustained, neither the 53rd of Isaiah, nor any other of the "Servant" songs could have been written with reference to our Lord; and therefore, when applied to Him, their meaning would of necessity differ from what they bore, or could have borne, when applied to Israel.

The "Servant," if he was Israel, could not also be the Christ; and not being the Christ, he could neither do his work nor suffer as He did. Between the two, however, there is a remarkable parallel, and in more ways than one. *In the first place*, they bear a strong resemblance to each other in some of their moral characteristics. In Isaiah 42^{1-4} the "Servant" is described as meek and gentle, forbearing and non-contentious, though also courageous, persistent and indefatigable. Under the Babylonian oppression he had at last become acquiescent. The foreign yoke, the very thought of which he had formerly resented, and by resenting which, in defiance of Jeremiah's warnings, he had brought on himself a great catastrophe, even a national overthrow, he had at last learned to bear submissively. Additional evidence of this is supplied by Isaiah 50^{6}, and Isaiah 53^{7}.

As for Jesus, the description of the "Servant" in Isaiah (42^{1-4}) is, with some slight alterations, transferred bodily to Him (Matt. 12^{18-21}).

The same character is reflected in Christ's own precept forming part of the Sermon on the Mount: "Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also"; which, though to many of His disciples, it makes His "yoke" seem other than "easy," and his "burden" other than "light," the Master Himself honoured by His practice, when, e.g., Pilate addressed Him thus, "Answerest Thou nothing?

Behold how many things they accuse Thee of (Mark 15^3) " ; and He remained silent, making no defence, and still less a counter-charge. In accordance with Christ's behaviour on that occasion, and probably with his eye on Isaiah 50^6 and 53^7, Peter testifies that, " When He was reviled, He reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously " (1 Peter 2^{23}).

Secondly, as regards their respective missions, there is again a resemblance between " Servant " and " Son." To the " Servant " Jahweh says, " It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel ; I will also give thee for a light to the nations " (Isaiah 49^6). Thus, and not by force of arms, would Israel gain the ascendancy promised. The " light," and the consequent " salvation," which Israel was appointed to diffuse, could only be such as he had himself received : and both were subject to great limitations, whereas Christ was " the light of the world," and His salvation as far-reaching and as beneficent as the sun that every day shines on every land, less or more.

Even after the return from Babylon, and for centuries afterwards, though during that time the diaspora actually did some proselytising among the nations, Israel, notwithstanding the great things said of him and predicted for him, was yet slow to learn the full import of his own high vocation, and

never displayed anything like that aggressive spirit against evil, or that evangelical enthusiasm, or that large-hearted humanitarianism, which, from the first, characterised the Christian Church—the difference between them, in these respects, being due to a many-sided defect in Judaism itself, as compared with the Gospel of Christ.

Thirdly, the Servant and the Son had this in common, that they were both sufferers, eminent sufferers too, suffering by the doings of others, and yet for their benefit. In other words, there was an altruism common to both, but in different degrees. Of the fact as regards the Servant, Isaiah 52^{13}-53^{12} is a constant affirmation and reaffirmation, to quote evidence of which as regards the Son would be superfluous, for it appears on every page of the New Testament. But, while both suffered, and suffered vicariously, their sufferings were not identical, nor could they be, if the one was a people, and the other a person ; as little either in nature or extent were the benefits identical which resulted to humanity from their respective services and sacrifices. The Servant's work, therefore, did not forestall the Son's, nor did the two coincide. In some degree, however, the one prepared the way for the other, as the ministry of John the Baptist did for the coming of Jesus. Nor could it be otherwise ; for the *Son* was also a *Servant*, inasmuch as He came not to do His own will, but the Father's.

In the *Second Isaiah* Jahweh addresses Israel, or

Jacob, in the national sense, as "My Servant," and so He addresses him again and again. The word עבד, in its ordinary sense, may mean a servant of any grade, or even a slave. But it suggests nothing abject or menial when the *Servant* is Jahweh's; for the servant always rises in rank with his master. An honour it may be even to be *servus servorum*, as the Pope, who takes care never to show too much humility, is proud to call himself; but to be "the Servant of Jahweh," who is not a man, nor even a king, but a god, and not a god merely, but the greatest of gods, and even more, and much more than that, the only living and true God; and not merely holy, but thrice holy, exalts His *Servant* to a dignity as much transcending that of any other servant as Jahweh transcends every other lord. The term עבדי (my servant) in which Jahweh addresses Israel is generally accompanied by epithets which clearly show that Jahweh honours him and quite uniquely. Of that we have a notable example in one verse, the first of Isaiah, ch. 42: Israel is not merely *His Servant*; but *chosen* by him from among the nations; *upheld by him*, and—greatest honour of all—endowed with His spirit and thereby fitted for the great task of "bringing forth judgment to the Gentiles." The universal God fitly magnifies His Servant, in proportion to Himself, by conferring on him a world-wide commission.

In the LXX, עבדי is rendered "my," i.e. Jahweh's, παῖς. Indeed, עבד is there so rendered

no fewer than six hundred times, as Grimm testifies in his *Græco-Latinum Lexicon for the Books of the New Testament*—a frequency which constitutes an emphatic claim for the equivalence of the Hebrew word and its Greek rendering. In the New Testament, ὁπαῖς is four times applied to Jesus as "the Servant of God," and each time it is so rendered in the "Acts"; twice in the third chapter, v. 13 and v. 26; and twice in the fourth, v. 27 and v. 30. In the third chapter, on both occasions it is, in our Authorised Version, rendered "Son," in *relation to God*, although that is a meaning which παῖς never bears in the LXX; and in the fourth chapter it is, in both instances, rendered "child," and in both preceded by the words "Thy holy," which, in relation to God, is also unwarranted by the usage of the LXX.

In each of the four cases where παῖς is applied to Jesus, the Revised Version, on the other hand, renders it, in consistency with the LXX, neither by son nor by *child*, but by *Servant*, i.e., of God.

Thus Peter, who is responsible for Acts 3^{13} and 3^{26}, and Peter and John, who are jointly responsible for Acts $4^{27\text{-}30}$, attribute to Christ a name which, in the Old Testament, was never applied to Him, and never could be, but always, or at least *par excellence*, to Israel. We have already seen that what is said of the "Servant of Jahweh" in Isaiah 52^{13}-53^{12} is in the New Testament continually applied, or misapplied, to Jesus; and now we see

that the Petrine and Johannine use of παῖς furnishes another instance in which our Lord was, in the apostolic age, and by apostolic men, recognised as the *Servant of "Jahweh"*—an identification which the Old Testament does not brook.

Fourthly, after their sufferings, and even because of them, both the Servant and the Son are promised a great reward. The oracle 52^{13}-53^{12} begins with the prediction:

"Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonied at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand" (Isaiah 52^{13-15}).

The oracle ends, as it begins, with a promise, extending over three verses: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jahweh shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sins of many,

and made intercesssion for the transgressors" (53[10-12]).

The body of the oracle, which dwells on the sufferings of the "Servant," is thus enclosed in a framework of golden promises. What a contrast to pass from the prologue into the heart of the poem, which iterates and reiterates the sad story of the Servant's sufferings and death! and again, what a contrast to emerge from the gloom of that sad story into the epilogue, which tells, in glowing terms, that all his sufferings shall yet be transformed into a glorious success!

Such also was the course of Christ's experience. He foresaw the suffering and shame which He would have to endure—the injustice, the contempt, the hate, the treachery, the mockery, and the cruelty, and he endured it all. But he was confident, nevertheless, that from it there would accrue glory to Him, and salvation to men; and how could He expect any but such a result, when He was always teaching His disciples that "whoso findeth his life shall lose it, and whoso loseth his life shall find it"? The same doctrine, ever near and dear to His heart, He taught in another form by an analogy taken from nature: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." By the violence of men He would be "lifted up" on the Cross, so as to be a spectacle to the unsympathetic multitude, and a byword for ages to

come, as one accursed; but He was nevertheless persuaded that His crucifixion—the greatest injury and insult that could have been offered to Him—would issue in a triumph, not to be attained but by a deep humiliation, and a complete self-surrender. The final commission, recorded by Matthew and Mark, which He gave to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," again indicated His hope of an ever-extending influence in harmony with a previous assertion, reported in the fourth Gospel: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12^{31-32}).

With a certitude not inferior to his Master's, and a breadth of affirmation exceeding any claim He had ever advanced, the apostle of the Gentiles declared that, for his complete self-abnegation, "God had highly exalted him, and given unto him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

This remarkable declaration is reminiscent of Isaiah 45^{22-23}: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else. By myself have I sworn, a true word has gone out of my mouth, a word that shall not be

recalled, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

But, whereas in Isaiah the homage is paid to Jahweh, in Philippians 2^{10} it is paid to the exalted Jesus; and, whereas in Isaiah 45^{22} the homage paid to Jahweh does not extend beyond "the ends of the earth," in Philippians it is the will of God "that, in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," and that this homage should be paid Him not merely by the denizens of the whole earth, but by all intelligences, in all parts of the universe. So the apostle ascribes to Christ an even larger dominion than the prophet ascribed to Jahweh; but, by so doing, he does not mean to encroach on the homage due to God the Father; on the contrary, he expressly states that the recognition of Christ as universal Lord was intended not to detract from the glory of God, but to enhance it, which could only be done, if, despite the difference between the Father and the Son, there was an essential identity between them, such as is indeed recognised by Paul in an earlier part of the chapter (Phil. 2^{6}).

In conclusion, between "the Servant" and the "Son" there is one great contrast—the more striking because of the foregoing parallels—which makes it utterly impossible to identify the two; yea, a great contrast between Israel and Israel as depicted in different passages of the second Isaiah.

In the opening words of his poem, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," the prophet reminds them of *all their sins*, as being responsible for their national overthrow, and for all that they had suffered in Babylon (40^2). In Isaiah 42^{18-19}, he describes the nation designed to be "a light to the Gentiles" as both deaf and blind; yea, as deaf and blind beyond all others; and in 43^{25} and 44^{22} he refers to their transgressions as a thick cloud between Jahweh and them, which, for His own name's sake, He had blotted out. And if we scan the history of Israel, what do we find? Even the patriarchs to whom Jahweh refers so lovingly (41^8) were far from being sinless. During their wanderings in the wilderness, the people, though delivered from the Egyptian bondage, and daily receiving remarkable tokens of Jahweh's favour, showed themselves ungrateful and rebellious. After their entrance into the land of Canaan, instead of clinging to Jahweh, their deliverer, they were too ready to yield to the seductions of the Canaanites—to worship their Baalim, and follow their vicious practices. During the period of the Judges they were always falling into sin, and from the humiliations into which it brought them they were delivered from time to time only to be again ensnared; and under their kings, most of whom were by no means faithful "shepherds of the people," the prophets had much more occasion to condemn and denounce than to comfort or commend them, until at last they

sank, morally and politically, into an ignominious servitude. What wonder that, when we identify Israel with the Servant of Jahweh, many exclaim, Impossible! But these considerations do not alter the fact that the Second Isaiah, who reproached Israel with its sins, and with the surpassing blindness and deafness which made it incapable of receiving, and therefore of communicating, the Word of God, nevertheless expected that by the Divine help Israel would yet do great things for God and man. So far from "the Servant" being identical with the Christ, there has always been a fierce antithesis between them. Unto His own Jesus came, but His own received Him not; and to this day the Jews as a people have stood out against Him and refused to acknowledge Him as their Lord. The "Servant," with all his faults and all his virtues, may be *Israel;* but certainly *he neither was, nor could be, the sinless Son of God, the Christ and Saviour of the world.*

CHAPTER XI

"Satisfaction" for Sin

In the *Confession of Faith* the Atonement is viewed as essentially a satisfaction for sin, and of the strictest character, "proper," "real," "full," "exact"; yet, despite all these elements of precision and perfection, it has regard in its application, not to the whole human race but only to a part of it, and a small part. So, after all, there is an important sense in which it is not "full." But, if it indeed be of "infinite value," as even by limitarians it is so often said to be, how could it satisfy justice in respect of some sins and sinners, and not of others?

That, though unlimited in its potentiality, its benefits are yet, by a divine decree, sternly restricted to a few—a number which no praying or preaching could increase by a single soul—would argue an indifference, or even a callousness, altogether unworthy of God, toward the majority left to perish without hope. What wonder, then, if any one, with a genuine interest in his fellow-men, or a true regard for the glory of the heavenly Father, rebel against such a representation of His character, and favour an interpretation of the Gospel less open to objection? Even if it did not prove altogether successful, such an attempt were at least worthy of respect for its motive's sake.

In Scotland where, from the days of John Knox, Calvinism had always prevailed, others before McGill had been provoked, by the unsatisfactoriness of the Creed, to a similar adventure; and, after him, in the course of the next fifty years, others there were that engaged in the same endeavour, notably the Rev. John McLeod Campbell, minister of Rhu, who, however, for his laudable effort, now much better appreciated than in his own day, was, in 1831, driven out of the Church of Scotland; and, ten years later, the Rev. James Morison, a rising star of the United Secession Church, who, after an intense pastorate of six months' duration, suffered a similar fate.

In 1879 there was another and more general stirring of the waters in the United Presbyterian Church; and in 1892 a similar movement in the Free Church, the result being two *Declaratory Acts*, both of which were designed to mitigate the offence of the Confession, but really left the two churches with the mere semblance of an enlarged freedom. How could it be otherwise when the compilers of the U.P. Act confessed that "they did not regard their statement as contradictory to, or conflicting with, the Confessional Doctrine of their Church; that no alteration in the substance of their Creed was intended or contemplated"; and, in presenting the first draft of the Act in 1878, Dr. John Cairns, an eloquent preacher, and a leader in the U.P. Church, but not exactly a pioneer in theology,

sought to concilitate the timorous and reluctant by assuring them that "in their Standards they proposed *nothing in the way of repeal, abrogation, or recall.*"[1]

How, in such circumstances, should such as were restive under the yoke of the *Confession*, and longing for deliverance, rejoice over the "Act" as affording them a new charter of emancipation? A deep sense of disappointment would have been more appropriate to the occasion.

Again the mountain had, by its labour, brought forth a mouse!

The deliberations which issued in the Free Church *Declaratory Act* began, in like manner, with the appointment of a Committee charged "to make inquiry, and to consider carefully what action it was desirable for the Church to take so as to meet the difficulties, and relieve the scruples, referred to in a large number of overtures (presented to the General Assembly): "*it being always understood that this Church can contemplate the adoption of no change which shall not be consistent with a cordial and steadfast adherence to the great doctrines of the Confession.*"[2]

Whether these "Acts" have proved a real gain to the theology of Scotland, whether they have not been a hindrance rather than a help to progress, are questions open to discussion. For nearly half a

[1] Dr. C. G. McCries *Confessions of the Church of Scotland*, p. 282.
[2] Ibidem, p. 286.

century now in the one case, and for thirty-five years in the other, they have satisfied, or seemed to satisfy, the demands of people too easily satisfied with the minimum of theological concessions. But for their contentment with a partial relief, which did not touch "the great doctrines of the Confession" (though these are not more exempt from difficulties than the others), there might have been before now an effectual demand for a general overhauling of the Creed.

Beneath the seeming acquiescence in the *status quo* which has obtained for so long, there is presumably a slumbering dissatisfaction in the more progressive party which will find expression by and by, though not, perhaps, till the two Churches, still engaged with the problems of the proposed Union shall be free, with new leisure and possibly increased powers, to face what is really a more important, and a more urgent, question than even "Union," viz., the removal of the reproach that, to this day, both tolerate a Creed which exhibits the character of God in a false light, not as a Father of infinite love, but as a narrow-minded and arbitrary despot. A general revolt there should have been long before now, from a doctrine fraught neither with glory to God, nor blessing to men, all of whom have a life to live under trying conditions, all a soul to save, all a hell to shun, all a heaven to gain. Between man and man, church and church, nation and nation, there can be no true union except

in the bond of God's own all-embracing love. If in His heart which is the centre of all things, there is an eternal schism, what peace and harmony can there be throughout His wide dominions? If He is divided against Himself, how shall His Kingdom stand any more than Satan's, if he be so divided (Matt. 12^{25})?

Among those who helped to relax the stern hold which for centuries Calvinism had on the Scottish people, and among the first to do so, was one who made no profession of theology—a peasant and a poet. Not only was Burns a friend of McGill; he sympathised with his teaching in so far at least as it repudiated "The Covenant of Works" and the doctrines of election and reprobation, then generally accepted. Till his day no one in Scotland had done so much to discredit the creed which, without a blush, limits the love of God in the most arbitrary manner, as did our national bard, nor had any one done so much by such simple means—not by sermonising, theologising, or philosophising,—but simply by a few words put in the mouth of "Holy Willie," an elder of the kirk who certainly was no saint, but faultless in his Calvinistic orthodoxy:

> O Thou that in the Heavens does dwell,
> Wha, as it pleases best Thysel,
> Sends ane to Heaven an' ten to Hell
> A' for Thy glory,
> And no for onie guid or ill
> They've done before Thee!
>
> *Holy Willie's Prayer.*

Such a doctrine is much better fitted to drive men from God than to draw them to Him. By this incomparable satire, Burns took his place as a *Defensor Dei et Fidei* in opposition to the mass of "orthodox" clergy and laity. In accordance with his own saying, "The heart's aye the pairt aye, that makes us richt or wrang," we may justly say that the wideness of God's love was with him an intuition of great force, blasting what to him was nothing less than a libel on the character of God.

The Christian conscience, so long aggrieved by a limited atonement, or, as was the case in the United Presbyterian Church from 1845 onwards, by a limited application of an unlimited atonement, never can be appeased till the glaring partiality and arbitrariness of the divine love has been banished from the *Confession* to make way for a more generous account of God's evangelical relations to the sin and sorrow of humanity.

That the death of Jesus, effected by a complicated process of injustice, intrigue, treachery and cruelty, was yet the means of satisfying "divine justice" is no less than an absurdity. But the hypothesis of the "orthodox," that to punish sin in the person of the Sin-bearer, the Father, by some secret thrust, drove the avenging steel into the heart of His Only-begotten, is not more consonant with reason or justice. Even had it been possible for the Father to wound or pierce the Son in a way not open to human observation, and so, with His own

hand, exact a perfect "satisfaction," enabling Him, without offending justice, to remit some measure of human sin, viz., the sin of the elect, how could such a transaction produce on humanity a wholesome impression, or any impression at all indeed, when it was utterly impossible for any one on earth to witness, verify, or authenticate it? And if, by any means, it ever leaked out that the Father had expended on the Son the whole volume of His indignation against human sin, would the conscience of mankind, which also (be it not forgotten) must needs be reckoned with, ever find "satisfaction" in suffering thus exacted? Would it not rather be as much offended thereby as by the crucifixion itself, and all the wrongs which led up to it, when such things as these are advanced as a veritable satisfaction to "divine justice"?

(1) While holding that the sufferings of Christ were not the chief and ultimate ends of His mission, but only incidental to it, Dr. McGill admitted that they could not fail to overtake Him in discharging His duties faithfully amidst "an evil and adulterous generation," and therefore, though not in themselves agreeable to the mind of God, they were yet inevitable if the chief end for which He sent His Son into the world was to be attained; for "it must needs be that offences come," though that does not exculpate the man "by whom the offence cometh." Granted that it was of greater importance that the special duties, whatever they

were, to which He was called, should be discharged than that the sufferings incidental to their performance should be avoided, fulfilled they had to be, whatever the consequence might be to Him. The same law, however, applies to the whole realm of morality :

> Where duty calls or danger,
> Be never wanting there.

The distinction thus drawn by McGill between such of the sufferings of Jesus as were merely incidental to the discharge of what, in his opinion, was His proper mission, and those which, in the estimation of the "orthodox," constituted the essential "satisfaction to divine justice," Robertson, in his characteristic style, denounced as "the marrow, soul and substance of that infernal scheme of doctrine supposed by Socinus and his deluded partisans—a scheme subversive of the whole mystery of the wisdom, love and rich mercy of God, in the recovery of our ruined race." Strictly speaking, however, these words, "our ruined race," he had no right to use, believing, as he did, with Calvin and his partisans, that God never contemplated more than the saving of a few—a scheme in which "the wisdom, love, rich mercy of God," and, we would add, even His justice, were certainly not displayed, but concealed and even denied.

In Christ's peerless life and sacrifice, what, then, was really the essential matter—"its marrow, soul,

and substance"? Did it not consist in that perfect obedience and unreserved submission to the Father's will which He displayed when, as the *Confession* puts it, "He, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish unto God"?[1] To this view the late Dr. Fairbairn, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford—certainly no "deluded partisan of Socinus"—gave his adherence:

"In the death of Christ we must divide asunder His part and man's; in what He contributes there is a saving efficacy; in what man contributes there is guilt which causes shame, and becomes a reproach to all mankind. . . . The death which redeems was all the work of the Redeemer, and not at all of men, who might sin against His grace, but could not sin away His mercy, or deprive Him of the splendid privilege of giving Himself as a ransom for many."[2] If it needed not man's greatest sin to bring about the Atonement, much less did it require God's "infinite wrath" against His son.

(2) From the sufficiency of Christ's atonement McGill seriously detracted by eking it out with the sinner's repentance; but so unique is His work of redemption that, without marring it, nothing could be added to it or taken from it. In substance and style so different are *His* propitiation and *our* repentance, so incomparable and incompatible indeed are the two, that to annex the latter to the

[1] Heb. 9^{14}.

[2] Fairbairn's Philosophy of the Christian Religion, pp. 432-3.

former would create nothing but an incongruity. The repentance of any sinner, and, therefore, of all sinners, being more or less imperfect, could add nothing to the "infinite" value of a propitiation already made for "the sins of the whole world." A beggar's rags would be no embellishment for a royal robe, but a decided disfigurement, bringing both it and the wearer into ridicule; as little does the work of Christ need, or tolerate, any patchwork.

How foolish and presumptuous would it be for a sinner to imagine that, by his poor repentance, he could complete, or even help to complete, the work of reconciliation, if it was left incomplete, when Christ, with His latest breath, exclaimed, "It is finished"! Such a vain thought would show that whoso entertained it still lacked the self-abasement essential to a true penitence.

If Christ's work has to be supplemented by each sinner's repentance, an expiation, completed once for all, there will never be; but only an endless series of particular and partial expiations, coinciding, so far as completion goes, with the moments of repentance in different individuals; or in the same individual, if, having relapsed into sin, he has occasion to renew his repentance, and does renew it, possibly, however, only to fall again!

No true penitent, however, will presume to regard his penitence as in any degree making amends for his sin. Rather would he say:

> Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin would not atone,
> Thou must save, and Thou alone—

a truth which Shakespeare knew as well as Toplady, and expressed with even greater power, when in the mouth of Lady Macbeth he placed the words, too stately for her to utter :—

> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hands ? No ; this my hand will rather
> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green red.

(3) Attention has already been drawn to an inconsistency between the "infinite merit" attributed by Robertson and his associates to the death of Christ and the restricted application of its benefit to the elect, as involving an injustice both to the non-elect and to Christ, and therefore militating against the Atonement, if its chief and indeed its one object was, as set forth in the *Confession*, the "full satisfaction" of divine justice ; for how is it possible to propitiate the claims of justice by a procedure involving injustice in any form ?

If the Atonement be of the nature of a legal satisfaction, then for the value given there should be a corresponding value received. To repay an "infinite" satisfaction intrinsically adequate to the redemption of all mankind, with only a comparatively few souls snatched from the general wreck

of humanity were to award the Redeemer much less than He has a right to claim. If, to the justice of the Father, He was required to pay "twenty shillings in the pound"—an expression used by Robertson in one of the traditional sayings imputed to him—why should not the Father, with His exact and inexorable justice, repay Him in a manner equally meticulous? Was it not a virtual disparagement of Christ's inestimable sacrifice, a denial indeed of its infinite value, that, in return for it all, the Father should present Him with a mere fraction of the human race? His neglect of the non-elect was intended, we are told, to issue in the "praise of His glorious justice"—an attribute which it has nevertheless grossly violated!

The "satisfaction" theory lies open to further objections. If justice is to rule, and nothing short of the "full" and "exact" satisfaction of its claims is to be tolerated in God's dealings with men, why should the whole race have been consigned to an inheritance of woe, temporal and eternal, not on account of anything they had done, but simply on account of the first man's first transgression in which they really had no part? Does such a doom consist with "divine justice"? a justice exact and scrupulous to the last degree, even so exact and scrupulous as to be unjust? If, with God, the satisfaction of justice were really the all-important concern which the Confessional doctrine makes it, would He ever have treated the posterity of Adam

as He is said to have done in accordance with "the covenant of works"? If such a wholesale condemnation of the race were in keeping with "*divine justice*," how does such justice differ from injustice? A justice which sees no injustice in consigning the whole progeny of Adam to perdition because of his one sin, which, in the circumstances, was no great sin, if a sin at all, exhibits its inconsistency in a flagrant light, when it anxiously construes the mediatorial work of Christ as a "full" satisfaction to the justice of the Father, and so anxiously construes it thus as to regard all the benefits of salvation as "purchased" for the elect with the price of Christ's "blood."

(4) Further, since the Atonement is by the *Confession* treated simply as a "satisfaction of justice," the question is forced upon us irresistibly, whether the satisfaction tendered by "Christ's perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself" is after all an "exact" and "full" equivalent of what was due to justice by those on whose behalf He intervened. This, I beg humbly to say, it is not. Could anything done, or endured, even by the Son of God, be really as satisfactory to justice as the sinless obedience of men themselves would have been? Is it not rather the case that no penalty endured by man as a sinner, whether here or hereafter, can ever be so acceptable to the Divine Law, or the Divine Lawgiver, as would have been his perfect conformity to its requirements? On the same

principle, does it not follow that no satisfaction rendered by the sinner's Surety, whether by vicarious suffering or vicarious obedience, or both, can fully satisfy "Divine justice"? Our conception of what justice demands is very seriously at fault, I maintain, if we suppose that any law, whether human or divine, is quite as well satisfied with the sinner's punishment as it would have been with his obedience. Nor is it less erroneous to suppose that any atonement made by another on man's behalf can ever be as well-pleasing to God as man's own perfect righteousness would have been—the righteousness which would have rendered an atonement by another on his behalf altogether unnecessary. The more highly one appreciates the awful significance of the categorical imperative of duty, positive and negative, the more readily will one acknowledge that, in strictness of speech, sin is not only an unjustifiable, but an irreparable and inexpiable wrong! To say that justice can ever be fully satisfied by any one in any way in respect of sin committed, whether by himself or another, is not only an erroneous, but a dangerous and treasonable doctrine, calculated to make sin appear less serious than it really is, and to weaken, in the same proportion, both the responsibility of the tempted, and the guilt of the sinner who has yielded to the temptation.

Only by grace, as distinguished from justice, can any atonement for sin ever be recognised or

accepted. Even the Atonement of Christ, with its alleged "infinite" merit, is not—with all reverence be it said—such a complete satisfaction of justice as to require no superadded grace to make it valid and effectual for man's redemption. How any one should have hesitation in asserting that, to "Divine justice," it would have been more agreeable and satisfactory that there should have been no sin at all (had that been possible), than that sin, the chief of all anomalies, should first emerge into existence, and then be visited with a condign penalty, whether in the person of the sinner, or of one willing to suffer in his stead, is, and will always continue to be unintelligible to the intelligent, so long as it remains true that "to obey is better than sacrifice," than any sacrifice indeed, that could be offered as a compensation for disobedience. To say with Samuel that "to hearken is better than the fat of rams" is a comparison which belittles, instead of magnifying, the incalculable worth of an unqualified submission to the will of the thrice holy. What comparison is there between obedience and any offering of fat, or blood, of any animal whatsoever? None.

Were it indeed the case that Christ fully satisfied the justice of His Father, there would be no occasion for grace in the subsequent treatment of those on whose behalf the satisfaction was tendered. But the work of Christ does *not* so satisfy justice that any man is, simply because of it, reconciled to God. There is still room for grace on God's

part in dealing with those on whose behalf Christ acted and suffered. Indeed, His grace shows itself quite as much in accepting believers in Christ as in giving Him to be the object of their faith. The view of the *Confession* that the Atonement is essentially a satisfaction of divine justice is not the one everywhere presented in Scripture. Not to the justice of God, nor even to His justice satisfied, but rather to His love and grace do we owe our salvation (John 3^{16}).

That "God may, and does, abate of His own rights," so as to grant forgiveness, though a full satisfaction has not been, and never can be, paid to His justice, was another doctrine taught by McGill; and unless the justice of God be of the same order as Shylock's, the doctrine is inevitable, if for sinful men there is to be salvation at all. But, in the eyes of Robertson and his party, who held that a "full" and "exact" satisfaction of the claims of justice was a possible thing and an indispensable condition of forgiveness, such teaching was bound to be reckoned rank heresy. With greater justice might one maintain that such a satisfaction, had it been demanded, would have been impossible; and had it been actually rendered, would have excluded occasion for forgiveness; for, where justice is already fully satisfied, what room is there for the grace which forgiveness always implies?

(5) The idea of justice, it remains to say, is utterly inadequate which regards it as simply

retributive, without caring on whom the judgment falls, whether on the sinner, or on some one prepared to take his place. Yet, onesided though that conception be, it has always had a great vogue. Righteousness, however, whether expressed by צדק, *δικαιοσύνη*, justitia, or Gerechtigkeit, is a moral excellence, much more noble and much more comprehensive than the one-sided justice which simply renders to every man according to his works. Of its two functions, the retributive and the redemptive, both of which are indispensable to its completeness, the latter is undoubtedly the more divine. God, as the perfectly righteous, has much more to do in relation to sin than simply to condemn and punish it. His Son He sent into the world, not to condemn it, but that through Him it might be saved[1]; and, in obedience to the Father's behest, He came to fulfil, and did fulfil, that work of grace on behalf of the sinful and unworthy. By a necessity, residing in Himself, God is at once absolutely bound, yet absolutely free, to seek, by all the means in His power, the salvation of sinners, and of one sinner as much as another. He certainly has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, or of any one of them[2]; and if joy there be in heaven over one repentant sinner, none of the angels rejoices over the case so much as He.

If it behoves even us, His creatures, though there is none of us free from the taint of sin and

[1] John 3^{17}. [2] Ezekiel 33^{11}.

selfishness, to care for the erring, to lift the fallen, or help them to rise, and to do all that we can to bring them to repentance, much more, in proportion to His boundless perfections and resources, does it behove the Almighty God and the Universal Father to take a part, and always the leading part, in extending and establishing on earth His kingdom of righteousness and peace and holy joy, by gathering the penitent into it, and making penitents of the impenitent. This He has always been doing, is doing now, and never will cease to do.

(6) Let me now produce an example of the terrible emphasis laid on the *merely retributive* justice of God by a Highland preacher of the eighteenth century.

In 1785, just a year before McGill's *Essay* appeared, there was issued from the press of Kilmarnock, in a very plain garb, a small volume of *Sermons on Sacramental Occasions*, the author of which was James Fraser of Pitculzean, minister of Alness, in Rossshire. It was sixteen years after the death of the author that the work first saw the light of day; and to the Rev. John Russel of Kilmarnock, a preacher well-known to all the readers of Burns, it was indebted for the publicity which it received. In a prefatory note, the editor informs us that he had the honour to be personally acquainted with the author, and considered his acquaintance the happiest of his life; also that "*in him concentrated all the amiable qualities of the*

divine, the scholar, and the Christian." Before placing it in the hands of the printer, the editor submitted the MS. to the inspection of Robertson, his fellow-townsman, who "read the sermons with much satisfaction"; in his opinion they were "judicious, scriptural and savoury discourses."

It may be interesting, therefore, to broach the volume that we may have a specimen of the teaching to which both preachers set their seal. Having affirmed that "in every sin there is an *infiniteness of evil and demerit*," the author asks, "What proportion of value does Christ's propitiation bear to this *infinite demerit of every one of the infinite sins* of the whole elect multitude?" With him, therefore, the supreme, if not the only, question in regard to the Atonement is an arithmetical problem; and his answer is, that "the most awakened conscience may be *fully satisfied* that the universal Judge, to whom the vengeance belonged, and who knew how to measure it out, hath *not fallen short of the needful measure and kind*, but *that Christ hath undergone* it all."

This, then, according to the minister of Alness, is the essence of the Atonement; *this* the one thing calculated to give peace to "the awakened conscience," viz., that "Christ suffered the *infinite demerit of every one of the infinite sins*," not of the whole world indeed, but "of the whole elect multitude"; these, however, he does not hesitate to declare, form "*but a small part of all nations.*"

In all this he seems to have been quite unaware of the miserable character of the Gospel which he was offering to his hearers, even to such as were hungering for the bread, and thirsting for the water, of life.

How a finite being can commit "an infinite sin"; how, for a single sin, such a being can either merit, or endure, an infinity of woe, are questions on which he does not seem to have spent much thought; at all events he sheds no light upon them.

(7) His condemnation of McGill's theory of the Atonement Robertson concludes with the charge that he made it "a figurative, improper atonement," as he made Jesus Himself "a metaphorical, figurative and improper priest." Without endorsing his account of the nature, or the *modus operandi*, of the Atonement, we have, in my opinion, no occasion to be offended, as were his critics, by the representation they attributed to him, that the atonement of Christ is no literal atonement, if, by such, he meant one of the same order, and actuated by the same ideas, as those required by Jewish law. So crude was the levitical idea of atonement that to regard it as entitled to dominate our conception of the one all-sufficient atonement would involve a gross anachronism.

The priests and people of Israel no doubt believed that their legal piacular ceremonies availed to avert Jahweh's displeasure, provoked by their transgressions, and to secure, or help in securing His forgiveness; but that they really had the virtue

attributed to them, it is impossible to believe. Even a writer of the New Testament, no other indeed than the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, plainly declares that they did not serve the purpose they were supposed to serve, that of taking away sin (Heb. 10^4).

Moreover, it was not for real sins merely—sins consisting in a violation of the moral law—that atonement was required. For sins that were no sins in our sense of the word, nor sins at all, but simply breaches, and it might be unconscious and accidental breaches, of ceremonial propriety, atonement was believed to be necessary; and just as necessary as for moral transgressions committed ignorantly, or inadvertently. Even for the Altar and other parts of the temple furniture, which were supposed to have been, in the course of time, desecrated somehow by human use, atonement had to be made periodically, in order that the efficiency of the propitiatory apparatus might be restored!

How different from any conception of atonement that can commend itself to the educated modern mind must the levitical have been, when, even for things inanimate, and therefore utterly incapable of sin, atonement had to be provided! How different even from our conception of *sin* itself is the one presupposed by the expiations of the Old Testament code!

And when we take account of other processes by which sin was, or was supposed to be, expiated,

in accordance with what was believed to be a divine prescription, the impropriety of investing Hebrew ideas of expiation with a perpetual authority, or, even, at times, with any authority at all, becomes yet more apparent.

When, for example, we consider how the grievous wrong done by Saul's infidelity to the Gibeonites was atoned for by hanging up "seven men of his sons" before Jahweh, and unto Jahweh, in Gibeah, the expiation strikes us, not as a satisfaction to justice, but as a barbarous revenge. Extremely careful we must, therefore, be not to frame our conception of the Christian atonement in accordance with expiations either sacrificial or judicial, that were practised in Israel. It is a mistake, however, and one frequently committed, to transfer the Old Testament notion of atonement, without the necessary modification, to the greater spiritual atonement which, being of an essentially different order, rendered the levitical expiations futile and irrelevant in the eyes of all believers whether Jews or Gentiles. While professing to take the death of Christ out of the category of the old-world sacrifices, how many illiterate Christians do in effect thrust it back into that category again, before they have done with it, attaching far more importance to the *shedding of blood* than to the spirit of Christ, the spirit of His life as well as His death, the spirit which made Him the veritable Lamb of God, that bore, and bore away, the sin

of the world. To meet the needs born of ancient ideas, practices and traditions, it may have been expedient to suggest a parallel, as did the writers of the New Testament, between sacrifices which, from time immemorial, had been offered on Jewish and pagan altars, and the one, never to be repeated, which was consummated on Calvary; but to meet the moral and philosophical exigencies of our day, it is absolutely necessary to suggest a contrast, and even to emphasise the difference between Christ's sacrifice and any one ever offered by Jew or Gentile; to maintain, in other words, that His atonement is figurative, not literal; spiritual, not corporal; and as much superior to any literal or corporal sacrifice as heaven is to earth.

Of the important terms connected with Old Testament ideas, rites, and institutions, many have passed over into the vocabulary of the New Testament, and in the transition become charged with a spiritual, or more spiritual significance. Paul, for example, must have startled the Corinthians when he said, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,"[1] and, in his second epistle, "We are a temple of the living God."[2] When was "temple" ever used in that sense before?

See how other words of the Old Testament changed their meaning: "Present your bodies a *living sacrifice* . . . unto God."[3] Both the Hebrew word for sacrifice זבח and the Greek *θυσία*,

[1] 1 Cor. 6^{19}. [2] 2 Cor. 6^{16}. [3] Rom. 12^{1}.

denote a *slaughtered victim*; so that a "living sacrifice" is a striking expression, a contradiction in terms indeed."

"They which are of faith, *these* are Abraham's sons."[1]

"Ye are come unto *Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.*"[2]

"Let us go forth unto Jesus *without the camp*, bearing his reproach."[3]

For other examples of a transfigured use of θυσία see Hebrews $13^{15, 16}$. In 1 Peter 2^{5-10} not names and phrases merely, but whole passages of the Old Testament, acquire a new meaning or application. The quotation from Isaiah 28^{16}, e.g., properly refers to "a stone laid in Zion," and laid in the prophet's own day, whereas the apostle (2^{5}) refers it to Christ, "the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made the head of the corner." In verse 9 he describes Christians as "an elect race," "a royal priesthood," "a consecrated nation," "a people for God's own possession," all of which laudatory terms are, in Exodus 19^{6}, applied to Israel, except that, in the apostolic quotation, "a royal priesthood" is substituted for a "kingdom of priests," an expression implying that all the people were called to priestly duty, and therefore really more applicable to the Christian than to the Jewish Church. Israel, having long shown itself unworthy of its high vocation, forfeits its titles; and now its

[1] Gal. 3^{7}. [2] Heb. 12^{22}. [3] Heb. 13^{13}.

honours and functions are transferred to a new Israel, charged with the great commission "that they should show forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

In like manner, the description of Christians as persons who at one time were no people, but now were not only a people, but the people of God; who at one time had not, but now had, obtained mercy, is a reproduction from Hosea (ch. 1) who, by divine instruction, calls his daughter Lo-Ruhamah (unpitied) to signify that God had now abandoned Israel; and a son later born to him is, by the same authority, named Lo-Ammi (not my people). By and by, however, these names of evil omen were divinely cancelled, and their place taken by the corresponding positives, Ruhamah and Ammi. Translated into Greek, and applied to people of different nationalities, who had embraced Christ as their Saviour, the words took on a different sense from what they originally bore.

Let the reader compare the 53rd of Isaiah with the uses made of it in the New Testament, and he will have another, and the most, notable illustration of the fact that quotations from the Old Testament do not necessarily bear the same reference in the New.

Conclusion

It now remains only to add that, after McGill had made his exit from the courts of the Church, he lived on for seventeen years, dying of asthma in 1807, his seventy-fifth year. Of his family, which consisted of three sons and five daughters, all, with one exception, died before him. Who, then, that takes into account his ecclesiastical vexations, the shadows which their memory must have cast over the whole remainder of his life, his long roll of domestic bereavements, and his final sufferings, would deny that his afflictions constituted a strong claim on human sympathy ?

This, however, was denied him by many in his life-time, and by many more in succeeding generations, who, influenced by a sinister tradition concerning him, took no pains to ascertain, or had no means of ascertaining, what either his virtues or his failings were. The truth, set forth impartially, shows that, if he did not altogether succeed in his high undertaking, he at least made an effectual protest against some of the ruling dogmas of his day, which were a grievous burden both to the Church and the community ; and so he gave an impetus to theological inquiry, which had been too long stifled, for centuries indeed, and thereby to the progress dependent upon it.

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